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J. Clark sc. 17

CONSIDERATIO

visit, urit, illuminat, separat, attrahit, recreat.

Printed for Sam. Chapman, at the Angel and Crown in Pall-Mall

The GREAT LAW of
OR, A
DISCOURSE,
Wherein the

In order to a Truly Serious and Religious
LIFE, is laid open.

late Prebendary of *Westminster*, Minister of the
Savoy, and Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty.

*I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy
Testimonies, Psal. cxix. ver. 59.*

*Bene dicere ad paucos pertinet, bene autem vivere ad
omnes: Lactan. l. i. Instit.*

The Eleventh Edition, Corrected.

Printed for *A. Bettesworth*, at the *Red Lyon* in *Fater-Noster Row*;
J. Hazard, at the *Bible* against *Stationer's Hall*; *J. Hooke*, at
the *Flower de Luce* against *St. Dunstan's Church, Fleetstreet*; and
R. Ware, at the *Bible* and *Sun* in *Amen-Corner*.





To His GRACE,

CHRISTOPHER,
Lord Duke of *Albemarle*, &c.

Lord Lieutenant of the Counties of *Devon* and *Essex*, Gentleman of His Majesty's Bed-Chamber, one of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy-Council, and Knight of the most noble Order of the *Garter*, &c.

My LORD, may it please your Grace,



Dare not call this Address, Presumption, the usual Compliment Men give to Persons of Honour in Dedications of Books, but Duty, and the greatest Service I can pay you. 'Tis the Cause of GOD, and the Cause of Mens immortal Souls, I am defending in this Treatise; a Subject which claims Attention from all Degrees of Men, and wherein the most puissant Prince is as much concerned as the meanest Vassal. It is a future Estate; and what becomes of Men, when their Bodies do drop from them, and what they must do to inherit that Eternal Glory, which a merciful God hath been pleased to promise them, that I intend to speak to; and if there be such a Thing as a Retribution after Death, and our Souls when they leave their Earthly Tabernacles must come to an After-reckoning, and appear before the dreadful Tribunal of a just and infinite Majesty, certainly that Man is unjust to himself, and an Enemy to his own Preservation, that dares neglect his Preparation for that great and tremendous *Audit*,

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and prefers not Meditation on that last Account, before all the Sensual Enjoyments of this World.

My Lord, We are fallen into an Age, wherein some few daring Men (indeed their Number is inconsiderable, compared with the more Sober Part of Mankind) have presumed to mock at a Punishment after Death, and termed that a Bugbear, derived from the Tales of Priests, and the Melancholy of Contemplative Men, which the wiser World heretofore was afraid to entertain, but with most serious Reflexions. When the ripest and most subact Judgments, for almost Six thousand Years together, by the Instinct of Nature and Conscience, have believed a future Retribution; 'tis pretty to see a few raw Youths, who have drown'd their Reason in Sensuality, and scarcely ever perused any Books, but Romances, and the lascivious Rapsodies of Poets, assume to themselves a Power to controul the Universal Sense and Consent of Mankind; think themselves wiser than all the grave Sages that have lived before them; and break Jest in their Riots and Debaucheries, upon that, which not only *Christians*, but *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Heathens*, the subtlest and most knowing of them, have, ever since we have any Record or History of their Actions and Belief, professed, and embraced with all imaginable Reverence.

And, are not Things come to a fine Pass, *my Lord*, when Christianity, the clearest Revelation that was ever vouchsafed to Men, hath been received, confirmed, and approved of in the World above Sixteen hundred Years; and the greatest Philosophers, in many of those Countries where it hath taken Root, have not dared to doubt of the Truth of it, the convincing Power that came along with it proclaiming its Divinity and Majesty; that these bold Attentates should now begin to arraign its Authority, and put us upon proving the first Principles of it, as if the World were returned to its former Barbarism, and we had

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had once more to do with Infidels; as if Men had divested themselves of Humanity, and put on the Nature of Beasts, and were sent into the World to understand no more, but the *Matter and Motion* of the *Malmesbury Philosophy*.

I confess, I have sometimes blamed my self for accusing these Libertines of Atheism, when I have understood what mortal Enemies they were to Lying and Nonsense: For how should not they believe a God, that cannot speak a Sentence but must swear by him; or the Truth of the *Christian Religion*, that put so remarkable an *Emphasis* upon his Wounds and Blood; or another World, that do so often imprecate Damnation to themselves; or the being of a Devil, who do not seldom wish, he may confound them? Would not any Man conclude, That Persons who do so exclaim against every mistaken and misplaced Word, and are such perfect Masters of Sense, and value themselves so much upon their Veracity, must needs believe the Existence of those Things they make use of in their ingenious Oaths and Curses, the Pompous Ornaments, which, in this Licentious Age, set off the Glory, Wit, and Gallantry of such accomplished Pretenders? But though we must not be so unmannerly, as to accuse these Wits of Contradictions in their Discourses; yet any Man that doth not love Darknefs better than Light, may soon perceive how faulty this Way these Scepticks are, there being nothing more common with them, than to smile at the Notion of that God, by whom they swore just before; and to rail at that Day of Judgment, which they seemed to acknowledge in their absurd Wishes and Imprecations.

Some have I known, who, in a serious Fit, have been pleased to tell me, that if they could be sure there was another World, and a Retribution for Good and Evil, none should exceed them in strictness of

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Conversation, and exact Piety of Life ; And I am so charitable to believe, that these speak the Sense of most of the rest, and that the imaginary Want of Certainty in this dubious Point, diverts them from venturing on that Innocence and Purity, which was the Glory of the Primitive Christians. But may it not be requisite to enquire, Whether these Doubters have ever taken the right Way to be satisfied ? If one that had never heard of such a City as *Exeter*, should be told, That a Friend of his lately deceased there had left him a Thousand Pounds ; and he should reply, That if he were certain there were such a City, he would repair thither, and yet would not enquire of those that are able to inform him : Might it not be presumed, that such an one had no mind to be satisfied ? And I durst appeal to the Consciences of these Men that doubt of an After-retribution, whether they did ever sincerely and impartially desire, or endeavour to be satisfied about it : Did they ever do what every rational Man ought to do, that is willing to be ascertain'd of the Truth of a common Report ? Did they ever put themselves to half that Trouble, to be convinced of the Certainty of a future Judgment, that they put themselves to, when they would know, whether the Title of the Estate they would buy, be good or no ? Do not they drudge from Lawyer to Lawyer, to advice about the Evidences that relate to it ? And by this we guess that they are willing to be satisfied.

To Scoff at a Motion of Weight and Moment before Examination, is a great Sign of Indiscretion and Folly in those that do it ; whilst the prudent Man, that desires to know the Truth of it, enquires What Solidity there is in it : Whether any wise Men were ever of that Opinion : What Reason they had to think so : And what enticed or moved them to embrace it. He is so far from exclaiming against it at the first Hearing, or Arraigning those that receive it as too facile

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facile and credulous, that he'll consult with Men whom he may rationally suppose, to be at least as Wise and Learned as himself, and see what Arguments they can alledge for it, and whether those Arguments be satisfactory or no ; nor would I require more Pains and Industry in the Case in question, than such an Application of Prudence, to be satisfied in the Truth of a future State ; and he that would thus proceed, must be strangely stupid, if he be not convinced of the Verity and Rationality of it.

But when I speak of enquiring into the Truth of the Notion before us, I do not mean a slight and superficial Survey of it, not a Flash of Conception, which, like *Lightning*, (to use *Plutarch's* Phrase) *dies assoon as Born*, but a serious weighing and pondering the Matter : For it would seem a strange Effect of Arrogance and Self-conceitdness, to undertake at first Sight to comprehend and refute all the Reasons of a Point, wherein very wise Men have employed the Contemplation and Study of many Hours. In all Disputes, there are Topicks of greater or lesser Weight, and if some of these pregnant Wits find themselves able to refel some of the weakest Arguments, 'tis ill Logick to infer, that therefore they can as easily answer the strongest and most ponderous. And yet this is the usual Method whereby these vain Men discipline themselves into Unbelief; they are careful to pick out such Additional Proofs, which Men of Reason superadd to their weightiest Observations, and these they take the Boldness to cavil at, whilst they avoid those more material Evidences, which would stagger their Understandings, and write a *Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharfin*, upon their Lusts and Passions: Which careless Disposition, I can ascribe to nothing so much as want of *Consideration*. And indeed, 'tis lamentable to see Men endued with Reason, sink so much beneath it, and live the Reverse of those Principles, which the Supreme Architect
of

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of Heaven and Earth hath engraven on their Consciences.

To reduce such, and other sinful Men, to a serious Consideration of their Spiritual Concerns, is the chief Design of this Work : And all I shall request of *Your Grace*, is, That you will be pleased to peruse it sometimes at your Hours of Leisure ; not that I pretend to have writ more, or better, on this Subject, than far more *Learned Authors* have done before me ; but as the mighty *Artaxerxes* accepted of a Cup of Water from the Hand of a Peasant ; so *Your Grace* will let the World see, how great a *Master* you are in the Art of Condescension, by Countenancing the Poor Present of,

My LORD,

Your Grace's most Faithful

and most Obedient

Servant and Chaplain,

Anthony Horneck.



T H E P R E F A C E.

TH E Great Foes of Religion, which have in all Ages opposed its Progress, and undermined its Glory, are Hypocrisy and Prophaneness. Between these two Thieves the Jewel hangs, as its Great Master on the Cross, and they both revile it, the one under the Character of a familiar Friend, the other under that of an Open Enemy. Which of these doth the greatest Harm, is something difficult to determine. Hypocrisy commonly ushers in Prophaneness, and, as a Lad thrust in at a Window, opens the Door to the greatest Monster: For there is nothing more common, than for Men, who are not very discerning, to condemn all Piety, when they see the blackest Crimes prosecuted under that Silken Mantle, and Men with the Temple of the Lord in their Mouths, abuse both the Temple, and the GOD that dwells in it. People whose Understandings are weak, observing Men to carry Daggers under their Bibles, and to make use of the noblest Means for the worst and basest Ends, are apt to think they may with Authority laugh at all that's Sacred, and fancy they are excused from all Devotion, when they find the greatest Pretenders make it only a Trick to cheat the World. Whether that Prophaneness, which hath too much of late encroached upon this Western World, do not owe its Original to such Religious Pretences of Men, who, under the Name of Justice and Sanctity, have dared to do that which Heathens would have trembled at, I leave to wiser Men than my self to judge.

Only

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Only I cannot but take Notice of a strange Effect, which our Sermons have accidentally, as the Sun doth Snakes and Serpents when shining upon unclean Dungbills, produced in the Lives of too many, of whom we might justly have expected better Returns in Religion; for while we have been discouraging them from Hypocrisy, they have run out into Debauchery; and while we have endeavoured to clear our Church from such as have but a Form of Godliness, they have made our Attempt an Opportunity to indulge themselves in their Lusts, and thought that the Way to approve themselves true Members of our Church, was to drink, swear, and be lewd, and to commit those Sins openly, which the other (may be) did in secret. Excellent Sons of the Church! that, Viper-like, tear up her Bowels, and, by a kind of Gallantry fetch'd from Hell, rail at their Mother more than Shimei did at David. I may be bold to affirm, That there is no Church this Day in all the Christian World, that in her Doctrine doth either encourage Real Goodness more, or strive more to keep the Balance even, that God may have the Things which are God's, and Man the Things which are Man's, than that we live in: Yet to our Sorrow we find, that while we have given People leave to laugh at Religious Dissimulations, they have laugh'd themselves into Licentiousness; and while they have taken Liberty to cavil at a false Religion, they have at last learned to be averse from all that looks like Holiness. This hath made me sometimes admire what these Men do with their Reason, and that they do not presently forswear buying any more Pearls, because some there are that sell Counterfeit ones for true. Strange! They should, to avoid one Extreme, run into another; and to shun Deceptions in Religion, run as far from it as the Devil can mislead them. How soon might the Folly of both Extremes be discovered, if Men were but willing to think more than they do: But while they go on in a Road of a few outward Duties, and consider not how unworthy of that Church and Gospel they live, whose Friends they profess themselves to be, no marvel if

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if they fright Men away from our Assemblies, and bring Darknefs upon all the Land of Gothen.

The just Indignation I have taken at the Injuries our Church suffers from these Scandalous Men, hath been partly the Occasion of this Treatise. For I see, Mens Cures lie within their own Breasts; and that so many are sick unto Death, and ready to perish, the Reason is, because they will not reflect what unreasonable Men they are; nor represent to themselves the Wrong they do to their Souls for want of a lively Consideration, as will evidently appear in the ensuing Discourse.

I confess divers Accomplishments which render a Book acceptable to curious Palates, such as are Rhetorick, Elegancy of Style, Fancy, Wit, and frequent Quotations of Authors, &c. will be found wanting here: But, as I profess no Skill that Way, so my Design was not so much to fill Men's Heads with Notions, as their Hearts with Fire. It was to engage the Ignorant and Careless to a substantial Improvement of their Reason: And if what I have said, can prevail with those that have lived like Beasts, to recover themselves into Men again; I both undervalue the little Censures of Supercilious Men, and content my self with that Success. We cannot all shine as Stars of the first Magnitude, in the wide Firmament of the Church; those that cannot, must give such Light as they are able to dispense: I envy not our Eagles in Divinity, that they see far more than I, but thank God I see so much: And while the greater Sages offer Gold and Myrrhe and Frankincense, I am happy enough if I may be allowed to bring Goats Hair, and Badgers Skins, towards the Accomplishment of the Tabernacle. A Critical Eye may spy Faults in this Free-will Offering, and I do not wonder at it; for my duller Sight, now I have done, discovers more than I wish there were in't. But my

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Discourse is fitted to my End. Doing good is my Intent ; if I succeed not, 'tis no more but what greater Men have failed of.

Farewel.

T H E

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*Nature, Usefulness, and Necessity of it,
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*The Nature of our Souls. The Eternal State they
are designed for. The Means God hath made use
of, to fit Men for everlasting Bliss. All these
Means ineffectual without Consideration.*



THAT we are designed for Nobler
Employments, than Eating, and
Drinking, and Sleeping, and Playing,
and following our Trades and Bu-
siness in this World, (an Happiness,
which Beasts arrive at as well as we) the great
Souls we carry in our Breasts, do evidently De-
monstrate. These being capable of knowing
B God,

God, of delighting in him, and conversing with him for ever, we may rationally suppose, That those who suffer the Profits and Pleasures of this present World to engross their Affections, go astray and err from the great End of their Creation.

While the Athiest laughs at the Immortality of his Soul, and the Prophane sells his better Part to the Devil; the Religious, who will prove the only wise Man in the End, and who hath none of those Clouds and Mists, the other are troubled with, before his Eyes, sees clearly what a Treasure the bountiful Hand of Heaven hath bestowed on him, in shedding abroad so Excellent, so Angelical a Being in his Body, a Soul that can build her Nest among the Stars of Heaven, walk thro' yonder Mansions, and taste of the Rivers which make glad the City of God; a Soul which can wing her above the Clouds, and survey the Crowns and Scepters laid up for those that dare despise the World, and have their Conversation in Heaven; a Soul which can live in Paradise, while the Body is in Trouble, and rejoice in him who is All in All, while the fierce Winds are whistling about her Ears.

The vast Reach of these Souls we have! for they can comprehend whole Worlds, and dive into the Causes, Ends and Designs of Things, and in a Moment flie from one End of the Earth unto the other; their fitness to receive Divine Illumination, their strong Desires after Immortality, their secret Actings without the Help of a Body, their Hopes of Heaven, their Fears of Hell, their Capacity of seeing Things to come, their
Ability

CONSIDERATION. 3

Ability to live above, their sublime Nature, their acting like Angels, their reflex Acts, their Immateriality, the Addresses God makes to them, the Threatnings and Promises of the Gospel, the Devil's busie Endeavours to undermine them, the Presages they have, the Joys they feel, the Torments of Conscience they endure sometimes, all proclaim the certainty of an Eternal State or Condition they are intended for.

This Eternal State, imprinted on our Natures, discovered to the *Gentiles*, proclaimed by the Son of God, preached by the Angels, confirmed by Apostles, revealed to Christians, believed in the World, as it relates either to Bliss or Misery, to Joy or Torment, to Honour or Dishonour; so how to enjoy the one and avoid the other, must, in all probability, be the great Object which God designed Men's Souls should be chiefly employed about.

For as there cannot be a Thing of greater Moment than Eternity; so he must be a Sor or a Beast, that can imagine, that God (who ever intends the noblest Creatures for the noblest Ends) will give Men leave to busie themselves about picking of Straws, and pleasing a few sensual Lusts, when he hath given them Souls capable, not only of labouring and seeking after, but obtaining a Kingdom which fades not away, and when we sweat, and toil, and labour to make Provision for 20, 30, 40 Years, what do we do, but proclaim our Obligation to be infinitely more concerned, how to provide for that State which must never have an End?

And as it was the Goodness and Wisdom of God, to make us capable of everlasting Duration; so we should be injurious to both, if we did not suppose, that God had ordered and appointed Means, whereby it is possible to save our selves from the Wrath to come.

He that takes a View of God's Proceedings and Dealings with Men, ever since the Creation of the World, cannot but stand amazed at the Cost, and Labour, and Pains, and Means, and Motives, and Arguments God hath used, to make Men sensible of their everlasting Interest, and to engage them to a serious Preparation for that World they must live for ever in.

This serious Preparation must necessarily be a holy, blameless, spotless Life; for the Means must ever be suitable and agreeable to the Nature of the End. And Heaven being a Holy Place, perfect Holiness reigning there, it is not to be imagined how Perfection of Holiness can be entered upon, without a considerable Progress in Holiness here, no Man reaching the highest Step of a Ladder without the lowermost; and one might as well flatter himself, that his Trade by such a Time will bring him in Ten thousand Pounds, when he is so far from minding his Trade, that he contrives only how to run with others into Excess of Riot.

Who ever hoped for a Crop of Corn without sowing any? Or who ever expected Tulips should grow in his Garden without planting such Roots as must produce them? The Innocence which is above, is to compleat what is begun here; and what Purity there is in those everlasting Mansions, is to crown that Sanctity the Soul arrived

to here; and the Light that shines there, is only to mingle with that which did illuminate the Soul in this lower World; so that if there be no Light in our Spirits here, there can no Light mingle with it hereafter: For God is Light, and his Heaven is nothing else but Light; and as Light cannot mingle with Darkness, nor Fire with Snow; so Holiness hereafter can mingle with no Soul but what comes attended with the Light of Holiness.

And indeed to plant this Holiness in Men, the Means have been so various, so numerous, so potent before the Law, under the Law, and under the Gospel, that one may justly admire the whole World doth not stand Candidate for Heaven, and all the Inhabitants of the Earth do not take the Kingdom of God by Violence.

Before the Law, the continual Pleadings of the long-liv'd Patriarchs with sinful Men, to improve the Light of *Nature*, that *Primar of Dignity*, the many Visions, Revelations, Dreams, Signs, Wonders, Voices from Heaven, the Ministry of Angels, God's Patience, Forbearance, Long-suffering, and sometimes exemplary Justice, the Examples of Holy Men, God's Love to those that honoured him, and the signal Blessings he bestowed on those that made him their highest and chiefest Good; what were all these but so many Calls and Entreaties, that Men would by Holiness, prepare for a future Happiness?

No sooner did the World drop into Luxury and Contempt of the supreme Law-giver, but God raised and sent forth Preachers of Righte-

ousness, to give them Notice of his Will, and their Duty; and when all Flesh had corrupted its Ways, *Noah* and his Sons, in all Likelihood, became Preachers Itinerant, who, in those 120 Years, which God allotted the Rebels for Repentance, travelled about the habitable World, and forewarned every Man, and bid them by Prayer, and serious turning to God, secure his Favour here, and his more necessary Mercy hereafter. And so after the Flood, when Vice and Folly had made Men forget the stupendous Deluge the Almighty had sent on their Fathers to cool their hellish Lusts; *Abraham* is set up as a Mark of God's Love and Bounty, and on him are conferred both the upper and neather Springs of Mercy, that by his pious Example, the Vicious Generation might be recalled from their evil Ways, and perswaded into serious Thoughts of another World, and so on till *Moses* his Time: In a Word, in *Abraham's* Posterity were such Wonders wrought, as were enough, had not Men shut their Eyes, to engage them to all that Strictness and Circumspection, which Heaven and a better Life requires.

Under the Law, God was so far from being weary of using Means, and taking Pains with Men in order to this End, that he seemed to have reserved those Ages for larger and fuller Demonstrations of his Power and Munificence; and if the People of *Lystra* had any Ground for their Exclamation, the *Jews* had far greater Reason to cry out, *That God was come down to*
 Acts 14. 11 *them in the Likeness of Men.* For while other Countries were left in Darkness, and like Moles, suffered to wander in the Shadow and Valley

Valley of Death, they, as if they had been made of purer Clay, seemed to be the Darlings of Providence, and the Favourites of Heaven. Heaven bowed to them, and under its Protection they went, as under a Canopy of State, and might with greater Reason than the Sultan, have challenged that lofty Title, *The Shadow of God*; and with that *Persian* Emperor, stiled themselves, *Kinsmen of the Stars*. Their Eyes saw Miracles almost every Day; and with their daily Bread they received daily Prodigies. Six hundred thousand Men saw the *Red Sea* divided. They saw how with the Blast of God's Nostrils, the Waters were gathered together, how the Floods stood upright as an Heap, and the Depths were congealed in the Heart of the Sea. The Enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the Spoil; my Lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my Sword, my Hand shall destroy them. But the Almighty blew with his Wind, the Sea covered them, they sunk as Lead in the mighty Waters.

This the *Hebrews* saw, They saw it and rebelled; and yet, which was the greater Miracle, in the midst of their Rebellion, God, like the Sun, when smiling through a Cloud, shewed them a merciful Face; not that he approved of their Impiety, but because by these Beams he would warm their Hearts into Obedience. Their Blessings came down upon them, not in Drops, but in Showers; and their Prosperity, like the Cinnamon-tree, was so fragrant, that Strangers might smell it a great Way off, before they saw it: The Waters of Life were continually flowing

into their Bosoms; and tho' God now and then frowned upon them, (what Father would not sometimes chide his Son) yet his Indignation, which, like Flints, sent out Fire, upon their penitential Tears, straight-way returned to its former coldness. The Rocks poured them out Rivers of Oil, they washed their Feet in Butter,

* *Æt Syl-*
ent.

and one might say of their Land, as * he of the Isle of Rhodes, *They were blessed with a continual Sun-skin.* Their Pro-

phets, what mighty, what powerful Men were they? Men that, like Lamps, consumed their own Oil, to light their Auditors to Heaven; or, like Silk-worms, spun out their own Bowels, to deck their Hearers with Garments of Righteousness. Where Words could not prevail, Tears were the Means to supple and affect them; and,

† *Psalm.*

it seems, † *There is no stranger Rhetorick in the World than these.* Here one Prophet spoke like an Orator, there another like a Logician. Here one endeavoured by Eloquence to charm them, there another by clear Reason to convince them. Here one threatened, there another promised. Here one wooed, there another thundered. Here one came with a Scepter of Love, there another with a Trumpet of War. Here one called to them from Mount Ebal, there another from Mount Gerizim. Here one adjured them by the Blessings of the Basket and the Store, there another by the Fruit of their Bodies, and the Fruit of their Ground. Here one made them feel the Fieery Law, there another invited them by Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price. Here one shewed them the Bread and
Water

Water of Affliction, there another opened *Rivers in high Places*, and *Fountains in the midst of Vallies*. Here one offered his Hand to *save* them, there another *made bare his Arm of Revenge*. Here one offered an *Ark* to those that desired Mercy, there another rained down *Floods of Curses* to drown the Obstinate. Here one represented GOD with his Sword drawn, *A Smoak going up out of his Nostrils, and devouring Fire out of his Mouth*; there another followed Sinners to the very Gates of Hell, with Offers of Mercy in his Hand; and while Vengeance was knocking at the Door, and the Sword was at their Hearts, called to them, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye Dye?* And what was all this, but to lay invincible Obligations on Men to reform, and, by Reformation of their Lives, to arrive at last at that *Harbour* of Bliss and Immortality, which the great Preserver of Men hath prepared for those that fear him.

Under the *Gospel*, to shew that this would be the very last Method to perswade and engage Men to *Holiness*, the Son of God himself comes down from *Heaven*, and turns Preacher. A Glorious Scene! To see him, who, being in the Form of God, thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, descend from his Bed of State, and sink from the highest Magnificence, into the Form of a Servant: What could the Angels think, to see the Prince of Life take his Leave of the Beatifick Regions, to disguise himself in Flesh, and dwell with Dust and Ashes? What was said, *Gen. 18. 21.* of God figuratively, *I will go down now and see, whether they have done according*

to all the Evil that is come up to me, was now made good according to the Letter; and *God*, who in Times past, in divers Manners spake unto the Fathers of old, at last spake by his Son.

The Men to whom his former Messages were sent, having beaten some of his Servants, and stoned and murdered others, the *Everlasting Father* thought, *Surely they will reverence my Son*. Indeed nothing less could be expected, than that the Heir of all Things, by his Greatness and Divinity, should strike them into the humblest Postures of Repentance; especially coming laden with the Olive-leaves of Grace and Mercy, and Pardon in his Mouth. Behold, the Desire of all Nations comes, and He that commands all the Powers of Light and Darkness, appears in a Pulpit. He, by whom the Worlds were made, leaves the Brightness of his Father's Glory, to tell Men what a Monster Sin is, how odious, how loathsome in the Eyes of God: how lovely, how amiable, how beautiful the Ways of God are; confirms the Sayings of all the Prophets of old, assures Men, (and certainly he could not tell a Lye) that all those Messengers of old were in the Right, when they professed, That Iniquity would be Mens Ruine, and that at yonder Gate no unclean Thing should enter, and that God must be preferred before all the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of this World: A Favour for which we want Expression, and which we must draw a Veil over, as *Timanthes* the Painter did over the Face of *Iphigenia's* Father, because we cannot reach it with our Colours; it is a Love which passes Knowledge; it surmounts the brightest under-

understanding. We see it glistering on the Mount of God, and it leaves us in the Vale gazing, and staring upon it, as a Thing which Mortality can shew no Resemblance of ; it strikes dumb, it dazzles the Eyes, it suspends our Reason, binds the Faculties of an inquisitive Soul, and fills all the Channels of it with Admiration. If a King should send a Messenger with a Pardon to a Malefactor that's ready to be turned off the Ladder, there is no Man but a Stranger to Pity and Compassion, but would speak in Commendation of the Royal Mercy ; but should the King himself approach the Place of Execution, and absolve him, it is like the unexpected Bounty would cast the Malefactor into a Swoon. And then, when the Great God of Heaven and Earth made his Favour ecstatical, went out of the common Road of Mercy, stept beyond all Precedents and Examples, encreased his Kindness into perfect Miracles, Miracles which the Ages before cannot parallel, and the Son of God made his Way through all the Clouds of Heaven, to tell Men how God longed for their Society and Happiness ; we cannot suppose a Possibility of greater Condescension. And that which still increases the Wonder, this Son of God intreats, wooes, and beseeches Men to bethink themselves, and dress up their Souls for the next World's Glory. He that might have come (as one Day most certainly he will) with Flames of Fire, and taken Vengeance on the obstinate, and terrified and startled them into Seriousness, and might, without a Metaphor, as it is *Psal.* 45. 3. have girded his Sword upon his Thigh, and looked stern on the Rebels,

bels, that would not have him reign over them, and frowned them into Hell: That this Son of God, this Sovereign Prince, whom all the Elements serve, at whose Command the Waters drown, and the Fire burns, and the Earth swallows up, that he should come, and draw near the City, and instead of consuming, weep over it, as if he meant to quench the Fire of God's Indignation against it; and instead of dooming it outright to Eternal Vengeance, wish, *O that thou hadst known in this thy Day what belongs unto thy Peace!* Call like a tender compassionate Father, *How oft would I have gathered you as a Hen doth gather her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not?* That he should bear Affronts, and in the midst of those Injuries, entreat Men to be reconciled to him, and seek for a Pardon! That he should make nothing of being slandered, so he might but win them to Repentance; be content to undergo Reproaches, so he might but allure them to God's Ways; suffer himself to be abused, so he might but undeceive them in their strong Delusions; bear with their peevishness and frowardness, so he might but persuade them to mind their Eternal Interest. That like his Apostle afterward, tho' free from all Men, he should yet make himself a Servant to all, that he might gain the more; unto the *Jews* become as a *Jew*, that he might gain the *Jews*; to them that are under the Law, as under the Law, that he might gain them that are under the Law; to them that are without Law, as without Law, being not without Law to God, that he might gain them that are without Law; to the weak,

be-

become as weak, that he might gain the weak, and be made all Things to all Men, that he might by all Means save some; that he should conjure Mankind by Tears, and Wounds, and his own Blood, by those very Torments and Agonies he endured for them, to have Mercy on themselves; to take a View of the burning Lake beneath, and run away? to look upon the Joys above, and be ravished with the Sight! That he should court them by the sweetest Invitations, and the kindest Calls; by the greatest Offers, and the softest Promises; Promises of Assistance, and of his Holy Spirit, of Peace and Joy in the *Holy Ghost*, and seal his strong Desires and Longings after their *Holiness*, with his own Death; and after his Death, being risen again, send Apostles, and whole Armies of Confessors and Martyrs to establish those Desires, ordain a Function of Men, that might preach those Desires in Men's Ears to the World's End; this indeed is a Condescension which the great ministring Spirits in *Heaven* stand amazed at, and may justly be looked upon to be one of those Things *the Angels desire to pry into*.

By such astonishing Means hath the great Immortal God endeavoured to effect that *Holiness* in Men, that *Seriousness*, that *Piety*, that *Heavenly-mindedness*, which he hath appointed to be the only Way to endless Bliss. Glorious Means indeed! But then they are no more but Pearls thrown before Swine, where Men consider not how far they are concerned in the *Heavenly Call*; and what can be the Meaning of all these Arts and Stratagems of Divine Compassion

on, and what should make God thus solicitous and careful to procure Man's Happiness ; and how dreadful it must be to neglect so great Salvation ; and God designs by all this ; and what the Intent of these unusual Endeavours must be ; whether Things are so, or no ; and if they be so, what monstrous Stupidity it must be to lie still, and sleep under such strong and powerful Invitations ; to lay all this Labour and Industry, and indefatigable Pains of God before the Eyes of Men, when they will not fix their Contemplations on the Remedies intended for their Recovery ; what is it but to make a Learned Oration to a Flock of Sheep ; and, with the Popish *St. Francis*, to address our selves to Falcons and Pheasants, and other Birds ; or, with him in *Sulpitius Severus*, to speak to *Wolves*, to talk to a blind Man of Colours, to discourse Mathematicks to one in a Fever, and to prepare Elixirs and Cordials for Men deprived of Life and Sense ? Without Consideration, we have little but Shape and Speech left us to distinguish from Beasts ; and God clearly loses the Virtue of his Exhortations and Entreaties, except Consideration sets them Home, digests and applies them to the Soul, and the inward Thoughts, like Sun-beams in a Burning-Glass, unite and continue so long upon these Spiritual Objects, till they set the Heart on Fire.



C H A P. II.

Consideration no transitory View of Spiritual Things ; imports laying the Heart and Mind closely unto Spiriuall Concerns ; resembles Magnifying Glasses, which discover Things Impracticable by the naked Eye. The great Ingredients of a Self-Examination, Expostulation, and strong Resolution.

HOW Consideration, Thinking, Pondering; Meditation, Contemplation, do differ, is not Material to enquire. Consideration includes all these, and is nothing but exercising and improving that Rational Faculty the great Architect hath bestowed on us, to the Glory of God, and the Felicity of our immortal Souls. The Character St. Bernard gives of it, may help to illustrate this Description : *It distinguisheth (saith he) Things confused, collecteth such as lie dispersed ; searches and dives into such as are concealed and hid, examines Probabilities, reflects upon what is done, resolves what to do, and presses towards the Mark, for the Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

The School-men are in the Right, when they call it, *Employing the whole Understanding about a Thing* ; for indeed, a Flash of Thinking is no more Consideration than a few wandring Sparks can be said to warm a spacious Room : As well may a Man hope to set a Mill a going,
by

by sprinkling some Drops upon the Wheels, as imagine that a few transient Thoughts will reform the Soul: And as in cold Weather Men do not get themselves a Heat by a step or Two, but by such Exercises as put the Body into violent Motion; so neither will a careless Thought now and then heat the *Hcart* within: But Consideration, which puts the *Soul* into a strong and vigorous Motion or Agitation, is that which must kindle the *Holy Fire*, and shed abroad *Life* in all the Faculties of the inward Man.

Not to mention here that the Word was originally used to express the Industry of Astronomers, who, by diligent Contemplation, and Observation of the Stars, their Motion, Position, Conjunction, Influences, &c. gave a Judgment of the several *Phænomena*, or Appearances they met withal, from whence it was afterwards applied to Men, who seriously and attentively ponder Things

שִׁמְי לִבְנֵיכֶם
עַל דְּרָכֵיכֶם

of Moment, whether Civil or Sacred; The Scripture usually expresses it, *by laying our Hearts close to our Ways*, as if it were with Consideration, as it is with Men's listening to a confused Noise, and laying their Ear close to a Wall, with Design to get a more distinct Knowledge of it.

And indeed, without Consideration, Eternal Life, and our Duties in order to it, appear no very great Attractive. Consideration clears up those Notions, dispels the Clouds and Mists that dwell upon our Reason, wipes away the Dust, discovers unknown Worlds, and makes even such Things as were vulgar and obvious before,
look

look with a new Face, they being found, upon Consideration, Things of greater Consequence, of greater Comfort, of greater Necessity, of greater Virtue and Efficacy, than before they were believed to be. So have I seen an old Picture thrown by, and buried amongst Rubbish, which afterwards being washed, hath proved to be a costly Original, done by a curious Hand; and that which at first, while sullied with Dirt and Dust, was worth nothing, hath appeared to be of extraordinary Value. Consideration is that Sponge that washes the beautiful Picture of *Grace* and *Glory*, and now the curious Lines appear, the lively Strokes of our Great Master's Hand are seen, the sweeter Lineaments discover themselves, and make the Soul enamour'd with the Spectacle.

It is much with Consideration, as it is with Microscopes and Magnifying-Glasses. What contemptible Creatures do some little Animals, and smaller Sorts of Plants appear, while beheld with our naked Eye, but viewed through Dioptrical-Glasses, what curious Fabricks do we spy? How inconsiderable an Insect is a *Gnat*? How despicable a Creature is a *Mite*? Yet he that through such Glasses beholds in them all the Perfections of the largest Animals, the Multiplicity of their Parts, the Variety of their Motions, and how curiously every Limb is wrought, how Mathematically all their little Members are framed and set together, cannot but like *Galen.* the great Physician, wonder at the Spectacle, and break forth into Admiration of the immense Wisdom of their Maker. Who would
C believe

believe there should be Plumes of Feathers in the painted Wings of a *Butterfly*? Who would suspect such Things as Needles, or sharp transparent Pikes in a Nettle Leaf, or think that any glittering drawn Swords and Daggers should be found there? Who would take an Atom of Quick-silver to be a Globular Looking-Glass? Or the Sand we throw upon Paper to be like Fragments of Chrystal, or Lumps of Allum? Yet through such Glasses, these Objects appear with a different Shape from what they did before.

Consideration is that Glass which represents Spiritual Objects in other Colours, than before were observed and detected in them. Sin that looked but with a faint Red before, through this Glass, appears all *Scarlet* and *Crimson*. God's Laws which before were hardly regarded so much as humane Injunctions, through this Glass appear so beautiful, so rational, so wise, so wonderful, so suiting to an intelligent *Nature*, that a Man with *David* cannot hold, but must cry out, *O how I love thy Law! it is my Meditation all the Day! I have seen an End of all Perfection, but thy Commandment is exceeding broad.* The *New Jerusalem* which looked but like an ordinary Building before; when viewed thro' this Glass, the Towers and Bulwarks of it are seen glittering afar off, the Pearls and Precious Stones it is paved withal shine with more than ordinary Lustre; and that which looked but dull and weak before, now dazles the Spectators Eyes with its oriental Brightness. Till Consideration came in, the Prodigal saw little. He heard Men talk of the Beauty of God's Ways;
but

but alas! he saw no such Thing: To him they looked as the Ways of *Sion*, rugged, uneven, and unfrequented; and the Fruits of the Spirit appeared unpleasant, and ill-tasted, fitter for the Rabble, and scum of Mankind, than Men of a brisk airy Temper: But he no sooner opens the Window, and lets in these Beams of Consideration, but all those Fancies, as Witches at the Name of *Jesus*, vanish, and he is wrapt into that high Esteem of the Ways of God, that he prefers being but a Door-keeper in the *House of God*, before the Office of *Grand Visier* at the Court of *Ahasuerus*.

But this will further appear, if we enquire into the essential Parts, or necessary Ingredients of these Spiritual Opticks. Consideration, as it is the Sun that enlightens this Microcosm, *Man*, and irradiates the benighted Faculties of the *Soul*, so that it may have this Virtue, there is required (and it cannot be Consideration without it) Self-examination, Expostulation, and strong Resolutions.

I. *Self-Examination*. That Man who examines not his Spiritual State or Condition, Whether he is that Sinner that shall be everlastingly miserable? Whether the Threatnings of the Gospel concern him? Whether he finds those Qualifications in himself, which the Son of God requires of all that shall be Heirs of Glory? Whether he feels those Things in his Soul, which Men that have a Title to the great Inheritance are sensible of? And whether he walks in that straight Way, and strives to enter in at that narrow Gate the Holy Ghost doth speak of?

He that, with *Gallio*, cares for none of these Things, is so far from considering, that he doth not believe the Immortality of his Soul, or another World. For were his Heart seasoned with a sound Belief of that future State, he could not but enter into his Closet and reflect: In this Bible, in this Book, which I do believe contains the Oracles of God, and his peremptory Will concerning the Salvation of Men, I find stubborn, careless, unconverted Sinners, adjudged to Eternal Torments; I find God protest, he will know none in the last Day, so as to shew them Favour, but such as dare deny themselves for *Heaven*, and heartily endeavour to do the Will of *their Father which is in Heaven*; I find God swear, that Men who prefer their Farms, and Oxen, and secular Concerns, before his Injunctions and Commands, shall never taste of the great Supper of the Lamb.

Am I one of these stubborn, unconverted, careless Men, or no? Why should I be afraid to ask such a Question, when there is no less than Eternity in the Case? I am not afraid to look into my Account-Book, to know what my Debts are, and what is owing to me; whether I am behind, or before-hand in the World; whether I thrive or decay; whether I get or lose? And shall I be afraid to know, whether I am a wise Man, or a Fool; a Friend, or an Enemy of God; a Favourite, or a Reprobate; Whether the Portion of *Lazarus*, or the Lot of *Dives*, will fall to my Share? Lord, when I hear, and read, that Men who are Strangers to *Righteousness* and *Holiness*, shall be tormented with Fire which

is not quenched, is it not worth, is it not just, is it not reasonable, I should ask, whether I am not that Man? If I am none of this Number, *What means the bleating of Sheep, and the lowing of Oxen in mine Ears?* I. Sam. 15. 14.

What means my Earthly-mindedness? What means my living in wilful Contempt of so many Commands of the Son of God? I take no Pains to be saved; some little Formalities and Compliments of *Religion* serve my Turn, and satisfy my Conscience. I can put off the Great GOD of *Heaven* with the World's Leavings, and throw him a dull, heartless Prayer at Night, when I have been wallowing in Sin all Day. I am for no Devotion that is either expensive or troublesome to Flesh and Blood, and such Ejaculations as do not molest me in my Pleasures, and as my Flesh can easily spare, without any Detriment in its Satisfaction, I am willing to lay upon God's Altar. I feel little or no Sorrow for Sin, no Remorse, no Compunctions, when I offend a Gracious God. A Temporal Advantage affects and revives me more than all the Joys of *Heaven*. I live more by Sense than by Faith: My sensitive Appetite is the ruling Faculty in my inward Man, and my Will is left unguided and unregarded to the Rapes of sensual Pleasure; I let the Hedge lie open, and the wild Boar out of the Wood may come in, and the wild Beasts of the Field; I mean, my Lusts may do with me what they please. I take no Care to rule or master them. My Lusts, like ill-bred Children, must have all the Toys they cry for; and if at any Time I do not satisfy

fie them, it is because I cannot, or dare not ;
 and it is not Love to Self-denial, but Force, or
 Shame, or Carnal Interest, makes me cross their
 Eagerness and Importunity. If I do sometimes
 resolve to leave either my grosser Vices, or my
 more secret Iniquities, the next Company or
 Divertisement takes me off again ; and I make
 no more of breaking my solemn Promises of bet-
 ter Obedience, than if God were a mere Stock or
 Stone, that takes no Notice of Affronts and In-
 juries. Self-denial I am so great a Stranger to,
 that I know not what it means. The Graces and
 Fruits of God's Spirit, *Love, Joy, Peace, Good-
 ness, Faith, Temperance, Meekness, Patience,
 Long-suffering*, have so little of my Desires and
 Affections, that I think it but Time and Labour
 lost to bethink my self how to be Master of any
 of them. Why should I flatter and deceive my
 self ? Why should I sooth my self into kind
 Thoughts of my Condition, that is so apparently
 dangerous ? Thus it is with me, why should I de-
 ny it ? Why should I call Light Darknes, and
 Darknes Light ; put bitter for sweet, and sweet
 for bitter ? Whom do I cheat all this While ? Is it
 not my own Soul ! And what shall I gain by it in
 the End ? Shall I think my self sufficiently Holy,
 when I am so little acquainted with the first Rudi-
 ments of Holiness ? Shall I think my self a Child
 of God, when that which I do is fitter for a Child
 of the Devil than a Favourite of Heaven ? Re-
 pentance, or turning to God, which the Holy
 Ghost doth so often, and with that Vehemence
 and Earnestness inculcate, implies an universal
 Change of my Disposition and Inclinations. And
 where

where is that Alteration, that Renovation of the Mind, Will, and Affections? My Affections are carried out after Froth and Smoke, as much as ever. My Love is set on Trifles, and is regardless of the highest and chiefest Good as much as ever. I hate Seriousness, and delight in childish impertinent Gayeties as much as ever. The Promises of the Gospel are as inconsiderable in my Eyes, and the Riches of this World as glorious and ravishing as ever; and I can dispence with the want of Spiritual Consolations, while I have but my Share in these outward Comforts; I think it sufficient that I am baptized and washed in the Laver of Regeneration, but do not mind, whether I am a new Creature: The Holy Water indeed was sprinkled upon me, but I am still in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity. It is evident by my Actions, that I have driven away, and quenched that Holy Spirit which was given me in Baptism, and yet I study not how to recover it; and what will be the End of these Things? That Spirit is a Spirit of Holiness, and till Holiness returns to my Soul, that Spirit will not return. Wo unto me! My Feet run in the Ways of Destruction, and my Eyes are dazzled with eternal Pomp and Grandeur as much as ever. An amorous Song is more pleasing to me, than the most harmonious Psalm. The Word of God is but a dead Letter to me, while a Romance, or a Book that treats of Folly and Vanity, transports me into more than ordinary content and Satisfaction; And *what I must Eat, and what I must Drink, and wherewithall I shall be clothed*; are Questions I have far

greater Desire to be resolved in, than to know what I must do to please God, and to be happy for ever. If I have made light of the Thunders and Threatnings of *Scripture*, I do so still. May be when God smites me, I seek him, and return, and enquire early after God, and remember that God is my Rock, and the *High* God my Redeemer; but the Rod is no sooner off my Back but I return with the Swine to the Mire, and with the Dog to the Vomit: Which shews, that in my Affliction I do but flatter God with my Mouth, and lie unto him with my Tongue, that my Heart is not right with him, and that I am not stedfast in his Covenant. How am I forced sometimes to invent Evasions, either that it is enough to believe with the Crowd; or that God will not be so cruel, as to damn all Men that are un sanctified; or that if I should begin a good Life, I should never hold out; or that if Seriousness were so necessary, so many learned Men would not have so great an Aversion for it; How often am I ready to yield to Athiestical Suggestions, that either my Soul dies with my Body, or that God takes no Notice of what we do below; or that there may be no Life to come; or that Religion may be nothing but a Trick. Horrid Thoughts! Yet what will not a Sinner do, or consent to, so he may but be let alone in his sinful Sport and Pleasures? My outward Man may be hath some Sparklings of Piety; but how foul, how sordid is my Soul? How little do I strive to be rid of vain, unclean, and lustful Thoughts? How easily do I yield unto a pleasing Temptation? The Devil
need

need take no great Pains to seduce me; for if he do but beckon, I make haste and run. How loth am I to resist an evil Motion? How loth to conquer? How loth to break my League with Hell? What an Aversion have I for the severer Duties of Religion? How soon am I weary of pious Exercises? I do not abate one Lust, not one Pleasure, for Heaven's Sake. If I know that eating a plentiful Dinner on *Sundays*, will make me sleep at Church, I have no Courage to forbear so much as a Meal for God. What did I ever do that looked like seeking a Heavenly Country? I read of good Examples, but they move me not; I see how circumspectly other Men walk, and yet I feel no Fire. When I am called upon by my own Conscience to lose no more Time, I stifle those Checks. Ah! how doth that faithful Witness within me sometimes plead with me, and bid me consider what I do, and what a strange Adventure I make, and who will have the Loss of it in the End, and how hard a Matter it will be to recall me when I am once lost? But I am deaf to these friendly Calls. It tells me, I lie in a dangerous Ditch, and that I am not in the right Way, and prompts me to vomit up the Poison I have swallowed; but I will not be perswaded that I am in a State of Condemnation. Tho' grey Hairs are upon me, and tho' the Marks of God's Wrath against me appear in my Soul, yet I had rather believe any Thing, than believe that God is angry with me. God's Spirit many Times prompts me to that which is good, but I run away from him. I see the Vanity of this World, and yet I dote on it; I am disappointed in my Expectations

tions of earthly Felicity, and yet this doth not drive me to Heaven to seek a better. I have a Soul descended from above, a Soul that can soar above Sense, and Flesh; a Soul capable of the noblest Operations, fitted for the greatest and most Spiritual Employments: But I let that mighty *Intellectual Fire* go out: I suffer that Light to be clouded and darkned, by following the Dictates of a sensual Appetite: I take no Care to subdue my unruly Passions; Good Lord! how do they transport me upon all Occasions? If this be not to dishonour God, to despise him, to mock his Threatnings, to undervalue his Promises, to labour after my Ruine, to slight the Offers of Grace and Mercy, I understand nothing. O dreadful! that a Creature, as I am, should have a Soul to look after, and mind it no more! An everlasting Empire to gain, and make no more matter of it! Endless Torments to shun, and be no more afraid! Eternal Wrath and Indignation to avoid, and be no more concerned! Rivers of Joy to inherit, and speak and think of it so little! My Conscience blushes at my Wilfulness, and yet I walk in the Light of mine own Fire, and in the Sparks that I have kindled. And must I perish thus tamely? Must I be lost after all the Intreaties of my Maker? Must utter Darknes be my Habitation? and the bottomless Gulph my Dwelling place? Tell not me, *vain Heart*, that I am safe enough; Can I be safe without the Favour of God? Can I be happy, without having my Name written in the Book of Life? Go tell a Man, that he may safely sleep on the Pinnacle of a Steeple in a Storm.

Storm. Go tell him, that he may safely walk like Queen *Emma*, upon Plow-shares glowing hot. Tell him that he may safely let a Viper bite him. Tell him that he may safely play with a Crocodile. Tell him, that he may safely walk with *Peter* on the Water, and try whether thou canst persuade him; and wilt thou delude me, that I need fear no Danger when God despises me? What do I do? If I have preferred my secular Interest before God's Honour and Glory, I do so still. If I have feared Men more than God, I do so still. If I have been loth to do Good with the Temporal Blessings God hath conferred upon me, I am so still. And what Sins I leave, it is more because I have no Inclination to them, or because I am afraid they will spoil and blemish my Reputation in the World, than because I love that God who made me, and hath obliged me by a Thousand Favours to esteem and prize him above all. And is this the Coat of the Sons of God? Is this the Livery of a Christian indeed? Is this done like a Man that lives upon God's Bounty, is fed by his Charity, supported by his Alms, and maintained from his Storehouse, and cannot subsist one Moment without his Concurrence, and hath not a better Friend in all the World than him, who is the Fountain of Living Waters? Who can believe this? What Man that understands any Thing, can think well of this Condition? Will it cure my Disease, to believe that I have it not? Will believing that I am not in Prison, bring me out of it? What if I was never in Heaven? What if I never saw the Book of Life? What if I

never

never viewed the List of those that shall be damned, and those that shall be saved? Doth not the Word of God tell me who they are that shall be happy, and who shall be miserable? And if the Marks of those that shall feel his everlasting Wrath are upon me, have not I Reason to look about me, and seek more diligently after Grace than ever I have done? Consideration, one great Design of it being to know how the Case stands between God and our own Souls; such a Self-examination must of necessity be the Corner-stone of this Spiritual Building; and comparing our Lives with the Rules of the Gospel, and the proper Characters of such as are in a likely Way to enjoy God for ever, may justly challenge the first Seal in this intellectual Paradise. But then, as building of a stately Gate, without a House answerable to it, doth but expose the Builder to Derision and Contempt; so Self-examination, without a serious Expostulation with our own Hearts, is but to make the *Accuser of our Brethren* laugh at our vain Attempts; and God scorns the Endeavour that could be crushed in the Bud, and tired before half its Race is run.

II. *Expostulation* rouses the Soul from her Slumber, and drives it away from the soft Down it would have rested and reposed itself upon, and gives the first Blow (for Self-Examination only threatens it) to that Tree of Death, I mean the reigning Power of Sin; and I see not how Sin can shelter itself any longer, or what Excuses it can make for its Stay and Continuance, where the Soul doth summon it to appear before the Bar of
Con-

Conscience, and enters into such Reasoning and Interrogations as these: Are these Things so, and do I stand trifling with my Salvation? Am I in danger of everlasting Flames, and do I lie playing in the Suburbs of Destruction? *Hannibal* is at the Gate, and do not I run to my Arms? The *Philistines* are upon thee, *Samson*, and dost thou lie still? The *Deluge* is coming, and do I talk of Marrying, and giving in Marriage? I see the Waters rise, and come up to my Ankles, to my Knees, to my Loyns, to my Neck, and am not I frightened? O Lord! *The Snares of Death encompass me, and the Pains of Hell are ready to lay hold of me!* Either I believe an Eternity of Torments, that shall attend a careless sinful Life, or I do not; if not, why dare not I profess my Denial? Why do I play the Hypocrite, and make the World think I do believe it? What is the Reason that I cannot shake off the Fears of it if I would never so fain? Why does something within me check me when I would be so prophane as to deny it? Can I ever be serious, and not believe it? But then if I believe it, what a Mad-man am I to loiter, when the Candle I am allowed to work by is almost burnt out, and I know not how soon it may please my Great Master to extinguish it? Do I lead a Life which is the readiest Way to Eternal Vengeance, and shall I not step back and prevent it? Can I imagine God will blot out that everlasting Fire, to gratifie my vicious Temper; or destroy that *Tophet* out of Tendernefs to my Lusts and Corruptions? Can I conceive it possible, that God will go from his Word, to please

please a stubborn Sinner? or prove a Liar, that I may go with greater Ease to Heaven? What great Matter have I done for God, that I should expect such Favour? How have I obliged him? What, by my walking after the Flesh? By my Greediness after the Meat which perisheth? By my Contempt of his Exhortations and Admonitions? Is God to be obliged by Sin? Is the Almighty to be made kind by Folly? Is he to be rendred propitious by Affronts? What Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? Or what Communion hath Light with Darkness? Or what Concord hath *Christ* with *Belial*? Do I not know that I shall be miserable, if I continue in that Course I have held on hitherto; and am I in love with Eternal Ruine? Am I certain that Iniquity will be my Confusion; and am I resolved to die? I have all the Reason in the World to believe that it was the Son of God that was the Author of those Threatnings and Comminations I find in the Gospel: Do I believe him to be the Son of God; and can I imagine that the least Title of his Word will perish? I have run up and down in the World these many Years, and hunted after those Vanities which sensual Men do dote upon: But will these save me when I die? Will not the Remembrance of my eager Pursuit after these Butterflies and Gaudes, fill me with Anguish and Sorrow? Have I lived in the World all this While, and am not I nearer Heaven than I was some Years ago? Must my Body engross all my Endeavours, and must my Soul be starved? I have a Soul that cannot die, and must not die,

and

and must shortly appear before God's Tribunal, and shall not I study its Safety and Happiness as much as I am able? Lord God! should Death arrest me before I have made my Calling and Election sure, how fearful, how wretched would my Condition be? Should it fall to my Share to howl in utter Darknes; How should I curse the Day when first I saw the Light? How should I cry out, *Let the Day perish wherein I was born, and the Night in which it was said, there is a Man-Child conceived: Let that Day be Darknes, let not God regard it from above, neither let the Light shine upon it. Let Darknes and the Shadow of Death stain it. Let a Cloud dwell upon it: let the Blacknes of the Day terrifie it.* Should those Tortures the Damned feel be inflicted upon me; How should I wish that I had lived all my Days in Deserts and Wilderesses, and spent my whole Time in Praying and Praising of God, and giving all my Goods to the Poor, and lived upon Bread and Water, and undergone the greatest Hardships and Severities; out-prayed a Saint, and out-fasted a Hermit, rather than ventured my Soul in so slight a Bottom as Worldly-mindedness must necessarily be? Oh! how should I wish, that, like the *Gaderenes Hogs*, I had leaped into the Sea, rather than run into Excess of Riot, and precipitated my self into boiling Caldrons, rather than into the Adulterous Bed; received burning Coals into my Bosom, rather than Partners of my Lusts into my Arms; and broiled in Flames sooner, than in the unhallowed Passions, that have brought down Fire and Brimstone on my Folly? Should that burning Lake be

be my Habitation for ever, O how I should imprecate all my merry Companions, that did allure me to run with them into Folly and Vanity! O how I should wish that my Eyes had never seen them; that my Ears had never heard their Names; that my Tongue had been torn in a thousand Pieces when first it entertained Discourse with them; that my Arms had been cut off when they embraced those Pleasures, which, like Syrens, cheat Men into Misery and Calamity! O how I should curse the Place where my Sins were committed, the Persons that occasioned them, the Hour that ever I thought of them! O how I should wish that I had improved those Opportunities I do now make light of, and believed *Moses* and the *Prophets*, that gave the Warning, and turned to God while the Doors of Grace stood open, and applied my self to the Ministers of the Gospel, and taken Directions from them what I must do to be saved! How should the Possibility of such Misery fright and terrify me into Watchfulness and Seriousness? Is not Eternity more to me than a Moment of Time? Can that Gold and Silver I enjoy, and do so much prize and adore, be any Motive to the great Judge of Life and Death to absolve me? Can the Pleasures of Sin be Antidotes against Sin? Or my Jollities procure a Pardon in that Day, when God shall judge Men according to the Gospel? What makes me thus stupid, that I should forego the *Milk* and *Honey* of *Canaan*, for the pitiful *Garlick* and *Onions* of *Egypt*? Doth God promise the Purple Robes, and shall I take up with coarse and ill-wrought Stuff?

Doth

Doth God offer me a Royal Seat, and shall I prefer a Shepherd's Tent before it? What Devil doth possess me, that I should prefer Dancing and Revelling for a few Hours, before endless Joy? Where is my Reason? What is become of my Understanding? Am I bewitched, besotted, beguiled, that I should believe a few flattering Motions of Flesh and Blood, before all the Oracles and Inspirations of the Holy Ghost? Are there such things, or no? I do believe there are; why then am I not more affected with them? Can there be any Thing more reasonable than Christ's Precepts? What is there in them that should discourage me? If God had commanded severer Tasks, is not Heaven Recompence enough? *If the Prophet had bid me do some great Thing, would not I have done it? How much rather then, when he saith unto me, Wash and be clean?* I that forbear the greatest Delicacies, shun the choicest Dainties, will not be tempted to eat of the most palatable Dish, when I am sensible it will bring upon me the Pain, either of Cholick, or Strangury; nay, I that lying under a raging painful Distemper, wish my self a Beggar, or the poorest Body alive, and would be content to stoop to the meanest Offices, so I might be but freed from the Malady that torments me: Can I scruple to obey these Laws, when it is to avoid an Eternity of Pain and Flames? Was not *Dives* as stubborn as I can be? And, have not I Reason to believe, if he were on Earth again, he would think the Law of Charity, the easiest and the reasonablest Law imaginable? Have not I Reason to believe, he would go beyond *Zache-*

us, leave himself but just enough to live on, and study how to do good with the rest? Have not I Reason to believe, that the Laws of *Christ* would seem very facile and practicable to him! Can I think he would say, *A little more Sleep*, and *a little more Slumber*, and delay his Obedience? He that hath felt the Misery of another World, would think nothing too good, nothing too dear, nothing too costly to sacrifice to him, who is the King immortal, invisible, blessed for evermore. O how glad would he be that God would accept of it! That God would smell the sweet Savour, and cast a gracious Look upon it? God, that gave me these Laws, and hath entailed everlasting Bliss on my sincere Obedience, certainly knew best what was fit and expedient for me; and he that is acquainted with my sitting down, and my uprising, and had a Hand in my Frame; can I think he would prescribe me any Thing prejudicial to my Happiness? These Precepts as they are Effects of the greatest Wisdom, so they cannot but be highly beneficial, and promote my Spiritual Interest; for they drop from a God that is infinitely Good, as well as infinitely Wise; so that not to submit to them, is not only to stand in my own Light, and to hinder my Soul from its proper Food and Nourishment; but to make my self wiser than the Almighty, and to extol my Reason above his Omniscience, and to accuse his immense Wisdom of Rashness and Folly. And shall I add Blasphemy to my Disobedience? Am I afraid God is not enraged enough against me? Or, that his Anger is

not

not red enough? Shall I throw Brimstone into the Flame, to make that consuming Fire more terrible? Is it such a pleasure to have God for my Foe? Is it such a Satisfaction to have him that can destroy both Soul and Body in *Hell* for my Adversary? Such Labyrinths, such Inconveniencies do I cast my self into by my sinful Life: And, are these Encouragements to continue in it? Is this the Wedding-Garment I may triumph in? Shall I sing in Chains, rejoyce in Fetters, glory in my Shackles; be proud of the Devil's Service, boast of my Slavery? When is it that I intend to be clean? Shall I delay it one Moment longer, that know not but I may be in *Hell* before the Clock do strike again? Dull, blockish Heart! what dost thou mean? Dost thou see how all these outward Things do fade, and leave the Owners miserable; and wilt thou take no warning? Dost not thou see how *Judas* droops, tho' his Purse be full of Money; and *Cain* trembles, tho' he is Master of a spacious Country? Dost not thou see how their Hearts fail them for Fear, because they have not made God their Friend? Look down into the fatal Gulph; Dost thou stand upon the brink of Destruction, and art thou not afraid? Dost thou see a crucified *Jesus* stretching forth his Arms to embrace thee, and dost thou feel no Warmth, no Heat, no Zeal, no Affection? Dost thou see the great burning Lake before thee, and dost not thou quake and tremble? Dost thou see the *Revenge of Blood* upon thy Heels, and wilt not thou run into the *City of Refuge*? Dost thou see the Angel of the Lord preparing to rain

down Fire and Brimstone on thee, and wilt thou not save thy self in *Zoar*? Wouldst thou stay till the Door of Grace be shut? Why shouldst thou tarry till all the Oil in thy Lamp be spent? Why shouldst thou fold thy Arms till Death takes the Fort, and leaves thee in no Possibility of Mercy? Why shouldst thou stand still till the Enemy lays thy Conscience waste? Why shouldst thou sleep till all the Field be over-run with Weeds? Why shouldst thou be idle, till the *Eleventh Hour* is past? Run, run for thy Life; There is Danger near; The Enemy is at Hand; The Fort is like to be taken; The Citadel is almost lost; Thou art almost at the last Gasp: Look up, Dost not thou see thy Saviour fly down from Heaven to lay hold of thee, and wilt not thou make haste and meet Him? Behold the Bridegroom comes, and wilt not thou bid him welcome? Dost not thou see how the Martyrs, how the primitive Christians fly to Heaven, and wilt thou stay behind? Dost not thou see how contented they are under Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings; yea, moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments? Dost not thou see how willing they are to be stoned, to be sawn asunder, to be tempted, to be slain with the Sword, and all, that they may obtain a better Resurrection? Dost not thou see how they croud in at the Gate, and wilt thou not see what they are doing there? Dost thou think they were all out of their Wits, to break thus resolutely through all Cloggs and Obstacles to Glory? If they were not wise Men, why do we celebrate their Memories? And if they were wise, wilt
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not thou learn Wisdom of them? If they were Fools, why do we commend them? Why do we write Panegyricks on their Names? Why do we admire them? Why do we wish that we might be as happy as they? If they were so, why wilt thou not be a Follower of them? Dost thou see them concerned, and canst thou stand like a Statue? Dost thou see with what Life and Zeal they fall on, and art thou senseless? Dost thou see them busie, and inquisitive, and active about God's Kingdom, and can they inspire no Industry into thee? Dost thou see how they prize and value the incorruptible Crown, and is all too little to perswade thee into a practical Esteem of it? What hinders thee? What is it stops thy Progress? Art thou still in Love with that which will undo thee? Why should Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, Lands and Houses, make thee lose a Crown? Hath God's Favour no Temptation? Is there no Charm in his Love? Hath Heaven no Beauty? If thou must be miserable, hadst thou not better be so here, than hereafter? Shall the present Food flatter thee into eternal Hunger? And because the Tree is pleasant to the Eye, wilt thou prepare for being expelled out of Paradise for ever? Will a few pleasant Cups counterbalance thy everlasting Thirst? Wilt thou venture an everlasting Storm for a present Calm? And run the Hazard of an endless Tempest for a few Months Recreation? Behold how *Moses* runs away from the World to be saved, and wilt thou plunge thy self into that dangerous Sea? Behold how *Elijah*, *Elisha*, and St. *John*
the

the *Baptist* retire into the Wilderness, that their Eyes may not behold these sublunary Vanities, and dost thou long to be in the Croud which wiser Men desire to be rid of? Good Lord! Whom do I intend to please, God, or the Devil? God I cannot please by it, for he calls to me, *Come out from among them, my People, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean Thing, and I will receive you*; and shall I gratifie the Devil then? O Wretch that I am! the Devil was never crucified for me; never spilt one Drop of Blood for me; never endured Agonies for me: He never wore a Crown of Thorns for me; he never tasted of the shameful Death of the Cross for me; And shall I fly into his Arms? How often hath he disappointed me in my Hopes and Desires, and shall I fawn upon the Enemy? Lay Force upon his Kingdom of Darkness, in despite of all the Bars, and Bolts, and Guards which the great King of *Heaven* puts between me and Damnation? I have been abused and cheated by Sin these many Years, and shall I be cheated still? Does not my Blood rise at the very Thoughts of it? I that will not be cheated in my Trade or Dealings with Men, shall I suffer my self to be imposed upon by a lying Devil? And when I study how to be revenged on him that hath sold me a Pebble for a Pearl, a *Bristol* Stone for a Diamond, and endeavour to prevent the like Deception for the Time to come: Shall I in these great Concerns of my Soul, where the Cheat is so apparent, where to discover it I need do no more but open my Eyes, where God and his holy Angels, and all the Ministers of the Gospel

Gospel assure me of the Fallacy, where the Cheat is of that dangerous Consequence to, and borders upon Eternal Damnation: Shall I be so degenerate, so base, so low-spirited, as to suffer my self to be thus grossly abused and deceived? A Child will not be cheated of his Puppits, a Beast will not be cheated of his Meat, a Dog will not be cheated of his Bone; and shall I alone be the Sport of Devils? I, a Creature to whom God hath given Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowls of the Air, and over every Thing that moveth upon the Earth? O Monster! Why so cruel to my own Soul? Why so barbarous to my immortal Part? Why so inhumane to my Spiritual Interest? Why so mad to run into the Fire? Why such an Enemy to my own Good? Have not I Enemies enough, but I must make my self my greatest Foe? Shall I join with that roaring Lion, and teach him how to devour me? Shall I give him Advantages against my self? First let him deceive me, and then laugh at me? First let him seduce me into the Net, and then punish me for being taken? I believe my Children, if they tell me that they have seen such a House on Fire; and believe my Neighbours, if they assure me there are Thieves broke into my House; and believe a Physician, who affirms, that such a Powder or Herb is perfect Poison; And shall not I believe that God, who hath prepared and fore-ordained these everlasting Burnings I hear and read of, and must needs know the Terror of them? Shall not I believe him, when he tells me, and protests upon the Word of a GOD, that

if I do not betake my self betimes to another Course of Life, I shall assuredly fall a Prey to those endless Burnings? Say not, false Heart, how shall I be sure God hath said so? Either profess thy self no Christian, or confess it. Hast thou lived so long under the Sound of the *Gospel*, and darest thou harbour such a Thought? I believe a Servant that tells me, That such a Man is like to run away with the Goods I have intrusted him with; and I believe a Stranger, that gives me Warning not to be familiar with a certain Sort of Persons in the Country I am going to; and I believe a Traveller, that tells me, that in such an Island there are Mountains of Fire, and Mines of Sulphur burning continually: Do I believe an Enemy that threatens to break my Head when he meets me; and shall not I believe that God that feeds me, and protects me, and knows all Things, and can do all Things, and never intended me any Harm, but hath given me such Evidences of his kind Inclinations to me, that I must deny my own Being, if I question his Willingness to have me come to the Knowledge of the Truth? I chuse a present Agony to keep off an After-Evil, and am content to prolong Torment, so I may but prolong this mortal Life; and shall not I, to avoid those endless Tortures, mortify a silly Lust, subdue my extravagant Desires, and inflict so much Penance on my self, as to cashire all darling and bosom Iniquities? What means my Conscience? It is not quiet under all the Pleasures of Sin: it is ready to accuse me; when it gets me alone, it twitches me, I find it a hard Matter to rock it asleep;

asleep; and when I think it is fast, like a Giant it walks again, and affrights me with Flashes of the next World's Flames; and shall I break thro' all those Funeral Torches to invade Damnation? Do what I can it wounds me, lashes me, tears me, and like some Blood-hound, follows me, and I condemn my self before any Creature accuses me; it is not to be bribed with Money, not to be hushed with Threatnings, not to be tied with Cords, not to be bound with Ropes; and, Lord, shall not I suffer my self to be taken Captive by the King of Saints! Such Expostulations, if the Heart be not all Rock and Adamant, cannot but startle the Sinner in his Licentiousness, make him stamp with his Feet, and force him into other Resolutions; which is the Third Ingredient of this great Art, *Consideration*.

III. *Strong Resolution*. This is the necessary Consequent of the preceeding Expostulations, if they be serious, and not used only out of Formality; and the Soul, that is by this Time stung into a Sense of its danger, and cries out, Lord! what have I done? will soon fall from thence into such Resolutions as these: Does the Case stand thus, and must my sinful Life expire into the Worm that dies not? Must my Frolicks die into endless Howlings? And must my Sport of Sin be crushed into never-dying Anguish? And my wilful Contempt and Neglect of God's Will, be turn'd into Chains of Darkness for ever? Is it so as God hath told me? And why should he tell me so, if it were not so? Why should he fright me with painted Fire? And how could
it

it consists with his Wisdom and Integrity to deceive me with Bugbears and Chimera's? If this be the Fate of a sinful Life, then tell me no more of *Delilah's*, tell me no more of Impediments or Excuses, or Delays. If this be the fearful *Exit* of *Sensuality* and *Irreligiousness*, there is no dallying with Sin; I will get rid of it whatever it cost me? I will hearken to its soft Airs no longer; I will be charmed no more with the lovely Looks of that Harlot; its curious Dresses, its treacherous Glance shall commit a Rape upon my Affections no longer. I will not for a few jolly Hours, neglect my Eternal Safety; Eternity is not a Thing to be made light of; I believe there is such a Thing; And why should I be such a Changeling as not to provide for it with all imaginable Care and Industry? I am gone; Farewel Applause and Greatness of the World. Farewel ye little shooting Flames of sensual Pleasures, which serve only to *delude* not to *revive* or *enlighten* an *Immortal Soul*. Farewel Cards and Dice, and all those Trinkets of the Devil, whereby besotted Men lose their Time and Peace. Time, What can be more costly? Peace, What can be of greater Value? Farewel fine Clothes, and richer Habits, which served only to feed Pride and Luxury. Pride, what can be liker the Devil? Luxury, what can be more unmanly? Farewel Ostentation and Vain-Glory, for which I have so often sacrificed, not only my Wealth, but my Rest and Quiet too. Farewel Applause and Acclamations of the giddy Croud, which have swelled and blown up my Heart so often, and made me enamour'd with my

my sinful self. Farewel my old Acquaintance, that cockered and helped to please those Lusts I now abhor. Farewel ye dangerous Friends, that would have dragged me into Hell, and would have had me kind to you even unto Eternal Fire. Farewel unhappy Men, who would have made me venture on the Burthen of God's Anger, which Devils cannot bear, and tempted me to be miserable for Company's Sake; I must either have no Peace with God, or none with you. The Friendship of God and the World are incompatible, and would you have me leave my God, my Happiness, my Joy, my Comfort, my Refuge, my Hiding-place, my Riches, my Treasure, to follow you to a Place of endless Torments? I see through all these Cobwebs; I see, I see what all your Follies will come to; I am convinced, that if there be a Happiness hereafter, as I am perswaded there is, the Course ye take cannot be the Way to that Paradise. Molest me no more, it is in vain. I will be chous'd no more; seek out Arguments, find out Flatteries, make your Motives as strong as you please, as cogent as you can; but with me they shall not prevail; here they shall find no Harbour. I will have nothing to do with these Pirates. They have made ready to sink my Vessel. They had swallowed me up quick, if God had not been on my Side. They had devoured me, if God had not watched over me. I thank thee, O God, that thou hast not taken away my Life with Sinners: I will climb Mount *Sion*, I will ascend God's Holy Hill, I will be kept in *McSheck*, in the Tents of *Kedar* no longer. *Lift up your*
Heads,

Heads, O ye Gates! and be ye lifted up ye everlasting Doors. I will enter; I will force my Way through all the Impediments of this flattering World. What should hinder me? *Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword?* These can but kill the Body, but I have an immortal Soul to save! if I secure that, I secure all; and I will secure it whatever it cost me. I will not act contrary to my own Perswasions any more: I am perswaded that all my worldly Glories will have a Period, and that they contribute nothing to my real Happiness. 'Tis a practical fervent Love of God that must make me happy: This is *it* must intitle me to God's everlasting Mercies: This I believe, this I am confident of; according to this Faith, I will act. God holds out a Crown to me, and shall I be dull and lazy under that glorious Prospect? I see the Royal Diadem afar off; leap out O my Soul to reach it, it is worth labouring, it is worth wrestling, it is worth sweating and toiling for Day and Night. See, see how to get Bread, the poor Miner digs in a poor and lonely Vault, while the Works over his Head threaten him with falling in every Hour, and crushing him to Death: And shall I fear Dangers, in striving to be abundantly satisfied for ever with the Fatness of God's House? I see a City which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God: I behold afar off a House made without Hands, eternal in the Heavens. Farewel Temptations, farewell corrupt deceitful Heart, I will believe thy false Suggestions no longer, I have a surer

Word

Word of Prophecy to lay hold of. How often hast thou taught me to cover my Sins with plausible Names, that I might not be forced to leave them? What, will the Almighty be blinded with soft Titles? Is he asleep like *Baal*, or gone a Journey? Or doth he forget? Or is he to be cajolled into Approbation of such Doings? What dost thou make of him? Dost thou think him to be some Heathen Deity, that hath Eyes, and sees not? Ears, and hears not? A Heart, and understands not? Canst thou draw a Curtain before the Eyes of infinite Wisdom? Will he, whose Understanding cannot by searching be found out, be thus deluded? Is he a Child which thou canst play withal? Dost thou call him God, and forget that he pries into all thy Designs, and Purposes, and Intentions? False, foolish Heart! Art thou not ashamed of this Sophistry? Wilt thou make me believe that White is Black, and Black White, and bereave me of my Senses? I remember thy Cheats; I have not forgot how thou hast soothed me in a Tempest of roaring Conscience; How hast thou darkned mine Eyes? What Fumes, what Mists hast thou cast before me, that I might not see the true Nature of sinful Actions? How hast thou prompted me to call my Pride Decency, my Covetousness Frugality, my Drunkenness Good-Fellowship; my Revenge, Vindication of my Honour; my Uncleanliness and Lasciviousness, Impossibility of resisting the Dictates of Nature? My flandering of others, saying but what I hear? as if God did not see my Inside, as well as Outside: Or could be deceived with Shadow and Varnish,

and

and were not resolved to wash away these curious Colours with Rivers of Flaming Brimstone! How often hast thou bid me call my greater Enormities, innocent Mirth, and made me look on them as Men do on Objects through the wrong End of a Perspective Glass, as if God were altogether such a One as my self, and would therefore be contented to call my Favourite Vices, Peccadillo's, because my self was loth to call them by another Name! How often hast thou flattered me with deceitful Riches, if I would but give my self that Liberty my irreligious Neighbours use! How often hast thou tempted me with the famous Examples of prosperous Men, that have been Strangers to Seriousness and Heavenly-mindedness! How hast thou disparaged Piety to me, as a sneaking Qualification, and represented Sin as the Royal Way to Credit and Reputation! Away with these Fables, I will be trapp'd and soothed no more; cokes Children with such Bawbles, I know too much to be ravish'd with these borrowed Glories. God hath spoken once, twice have I heard it, nay a thousand Times have I heard it, *That he that overcomes, shall not be hurt by the Second Death*; which is, that everlasting Separation of the Soul from the Great and Glorious Presence of GOD: And what overcoming can he mean, but Conquest of such treacherous Suggestions? If I overcome thee, I do my Work. If I master thee, I am made for ever. If I subdue thee, my greatest Impediment is removed. If I can but hate thy Flatteries, behold, God will be my Rock, and my Salvation, and my Defence, and

I shall not be moved. How often hast thou promised me long Life, and Ease, and Plenty, if I would stream out my Golden Years in Vanity, and brutish Delights, as if my Youth had been too good for God; and God, when he wooed me to Obedience, came but to torment me, as the evil Spirit said in the *Gospel*, before my Time, as if I were the great Disposer of my Time, and could command my Age to flourish at Four-score! How hast thou bid me delay my Repentance and Seriousness, and given me Hopes that I should find a convenient Time hereafter, when I could keep Sin and the World no longer! As if Repentance were in my own Hands, and I could command it to attend me at my Pleasure, and as if it were a Work to be dispatched with a Sigh or Groan! How hast thou tempted me to Sin, under a Pretence that none should see it; or, if the Sin could not be kept secret, none should know that I had a Hand in it; as if God did not see by Night as well as by Day, and a private Corner could keep out Omnipotence: Or, as if God sat like an idle Pilot in Heaven, without regarding how the great Ship of this World is governed! How hast thou, under the Colour of a single Sin, involved me into a Necessity of adding another, and been restless till I have added more to support the rest! And how treacherously hast thou bid me walk in the Counsel of the Ungodly, when it was but to engage me to stand in the Way of Sinners, and then to make me sit down in the Seat of the Scornful! How hast thou prompted me to palliate mine Offences, and to lay them at other Men's Doors?

Lo!

Lo! thus I have found, that God at first did make me upright, but thou hast taught me to seek out many Inventions, Tricks how to be undone, Ways how to make my self worse than the Beasts that perish. Go, Cozener, tell thy Stories to Men that will not hear the Truth: I will hear what the Lord will say to me. O God, I need no Accuser, no Witness, no Spy to betray me. I confess my self guilty, I pass Sentence upon my self. My Conscience condemns me, my Judge sits in my Soul, my Eyes, my Hands, my Feet, the Theatre, the Ale-house, the Tavern, they give in Evidence against me. My Actions fill me with Shame, the very Clothes I wear contribute to my Confusion. Deceitful Heart! how hast thou bid me trust to broken Reeds, and lean on Props which were rotten and decayed! I have seen enough of thy Falshood and Inconstancy, I will be held no longer, I will stay no longer in *Sodom*. These flowery Meadows, this enamelled Grass shall make me lie down no more; I see there is Death in the Pot, and the Great Day will be upon me for all the seeming Delay, before this poor besotted World is aware.

I come, Lord, I will stand out against thy Calls no longer: I do hear thy Voice, and I will harden my Heart no more. It is the Voice of my Beloved that knocks, I will arise and let him in. Awake up, my Glory, awake; I have slumbered long enough. Get up, my sleepy Affections, the Lord is at hand. My Heart is hot within me, the Fire of God burns within me. O my God, wilt thou spread open thy Arms to a Wretch that
hath

hath been filled with Unrighteousness and Deceit; and having known the Judgment of God, that they who commit such Things are worthy of Death, hath not only done the same, but hath had Pleasure in them that do them! Is there yet Mercy in store for such a Rebel? Will God be yet intreated? Then, I cheerfully renounce the Devil, and all his Works. O God, to whom Vengeance belongs, shew thy self. Arise, Lord! let all mine Enemies be scattered, even my Sins; as Smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as Wax melterh before the Fire, even so let my Sins perish at the Presence of God. I know the World will laugh at me for this Resolution, but I will give them Leave to mock; if I can but get into yonder blessed and everlasting Mansions, laugh on ye Mad-men, I have a God will honour me. If there be a future Judgment, and Men shall be rewarded according to their Works, and God will be so severe against stubborn Sinners, as he hath threatned, (and indeed he cannot be God without it; to be God, and not true to his Word, implies a Contradiction) then sure I am, the rich, the voluptuous, the carnal Men of this World, that make such Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof, must certainly be in a more miserable Condition than I. Methinks I see how they tremble before the Throne. They thought it below them here on Earth, to make Religion their Business; methinks I see how ashamed they are of their Folly, how the Wretches blush to see, that God hath chosen the foolish Things of this World to confound the wise: Methinks I hear them cry out to Rocks

and Mountains, Fall on us, and hide us from the Face of him that sits on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb. O how their Thoughts at that Time will be all changed, and all their Triumphs be turned into Funerals? Methinks I see how *Herod* is confounded to see the humble *Baptist* advanced above the Kings and Princes of this World, even that *Baptist* whom he valued not half so much as he did a Strumpet, whom for Sport's sake, he could Behead and deprive of Life, to save his Reputation among Flatterers and Sycophants! Methinks I see how the bloody *Nero* starts, to see *Paul* the Prisoner decked with Robes of Eternal Light; that *Paul*, who fell a Sacrifice to his Pleasure, and whom he would have disdained to fet with the Dogs of his Flock! I quake at the dismal Sight! My thoughts are filled with horror! I'll be wise before it be too late, I'll not hazard my Soul as most Men do. O how I blame my self for serving Sin and the World thus long! Had God snatched me away in that dismal Service, how dreadful would my *Wages* have been? Blessed be God, who hath been thus patient with me; I'll trespass no longer upon his Long-suffering. Come ye Ministers of the Gospel, tell me what I must do to be Saved; lead me, direct me, I'll follow, and neither Men nor Devils shall draw me away. Teach me to sing the Songs of *Zion*. Instruct me how to prefer *Jerusalem* above my chief Joy. Shew me the Path of Life, leave not my Soul in Hell. Pull it out of the Fire; I have made a solemn Choice of God for my Portion. Let me know
how

how I must love him : I'll obey your Counsel, I'll act according to your Directions. Be not afraid of me, I will not turn back in the Day of Battle. I have done with these stolen Waters ; I see no Felicity that arises from bathing in those dangerous Streams ; they may lull and charm for a while, but leave the Soul empty. If any Man had reason to find Satisfaction in them, *Solomon* had, who had Riches, and Power, and Lust enough to range where he pleased ; yet when he had walked through the whole Garden of sensual Pleasures, cropt the choicest Flowers, fed upon the most luscious Fruits, left nothing unattempted to know the utmost Reach of that Fools Paradise, searched all the By-places and Corners where they said the Treasures of Satisfaction lay, unravell'd all the secret Intrigues of Sin, ransack'd all the hidden Mysteries of it : When he had thus wandered up and down, and almost lost himself in that unhappy Labyrinth, the Verdict he gives of all is this, *Vanity of Vanities*, mighty Nothings, perfect Trouble and Vexation of Spirits ; and then protests, that the only Satisfaction that is solid, and like to last, lies in fearing God and keeping his Commandments. That's it, I see, Men are forced to confess at last, and too often when it is too late. I see most Men are of another Mind when they come to die, to what they were in the time of their Strength, and Health, and Liberty ; and that Seriousness they formerly derided, they then wish for, when the Sentence is passing upon them, *Cut them down, why do they cumber the Ground ?* The Pearl they might formerly have had at a reasonable Price,

and would not, they now would purchase with ten thousand Worlds, if they had them, and cannot. This it is, to turn the Grace of God into Wantonness, to play with the Glorious Message sent to them by the great Bridegroom of their Souls, and to make light of Invitations to the Supper of the Lamb. O Folly! O Madness! O monstrous Stupidity! *O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, unto their Assembly, mine Honour, be not thou united.* I will take Warning by these sad Examples. Their Imprudence shall make me wise; their Indiscretion shall make me take another Course. I see there are snares laid for my Soul, I am beset with Temptations. If I tremble at the main Ocean, a shallow Puddle is offered me to drown my self in. What should make the Devil so busie, so earnest, so industrious, to draw my Soul away from the Fountain of Living-Waters? Without all peradventure he sees what Happiness it is capable of, even of a Happiness which knows neither Measure nor End. He sees how careful the Angels are of it, how they solicit it to avouch the Lord for its God. He was once in Heaven, and knows that holy Souls shall possess the Seats of the Apostate Spirits, and that what he lost, they shall enjoy; the Dignity he and his dismal Associates forfeited, they shall inherit; and the Thrones he and his Crew did once triumph in, shall fall to their Share. He sees how fair a Soul redeemed with the Blood of Christ stands for this high Preferment: He sees the Inclinations and Propensions it hath to take up with God alone; and, to divert the Stream, he dresses out Sin in several Garbs,

Garbs, that if one will not tempt me, another may. But, O my God, Sin shall insinuate into my Favour no more; it shall creep into my Bosom no more; I will avoid all Familiarity with it; I will hug the Monster no more; I will take it no longer for a harmless Thing, it shall be my Darling, my *Benjamin* no more; my Eyes shall be no longer pleased with viewing of it; my Tongue shall commend and praise it no more; I will open my Door to the fatal Guest no more: My faint Oppositions shall be turned into stronger Resistances; I will call up my Blood and Courage to withstand its Juggles; I have resolved, and my Heart shall be carried out after this Idol no more. Come, my Soul, awake to higher Thoughts, and Hopes, and Labours. Away with thy sluggish Wishes, and with thy dull Endeavours. Are these fit for seeking eternal Joys? Doth a creeping Pace beseem a Man that is resolved for Eternity? The Voice of the Lord is powerful, the Voice of the Lord is full of Majesty, the Voice of the Lord breaks the Cedars; the Voice of the Lord shakes the Wilderness. And art thou the only Creature whom it cannot shake? It is done; mine Eyes are open, and I am resolved. It was Resolution made the three Men, *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, adventure in a fiery Furnace. It was Resolution made *St. Paul* ready, not to suffer only, but to die at *Jerusalem* for the Name of *Jesus*. It was Resolution made *David's* Worthies enter into the Camp of the *Philistines*, and draw Water out of the Well of *Bethlehem*. It was Resolution made *Ignatius* despise Fire.

and Sword, and Wild Beasts, to procure the Favour of him whom his Soul did love. It was

Resolution made the *Grecian* * Woman
 * *Tertullian.*
Apol. c. 50. endure the Rack, and when prompted

by the Executioner to confess her Associates in the Treason, bite her Tongue in Pieces, that she might not be in a possibility of betraying her Partners in the Conspiracy. It was Re-

solution made * *Mutius* stand still and
 * *Id. Ibid.* unconcern'd, while his Right Hand

burned. It was Resolution made *Empedocles* sacrifice himself to the Flames of *Ætna*. It was Re-

solution made *Anaxarchus*, when his Bones were crushed, make Sport with his Torments, and cry out, *Break, break the Carcass of Anaxarchus, but his Mind you shall never break.* It was Reso-

lution made *Regulus* fling himself into the merciless Arms of his Enemies, and suffer himself

to be stung and prick'd to Death. It was Resolution made *Attalus* sit down chearfully in the Fi-

ery Chair his Prosecutors had prepared for him, and say, *It is not we that do eat Children, but it is you that devour innocent Christians.* It was

Resolution made *Blandina* encourage her Fel-

low-Christians, tho' she was wounded,
 * *Tertul. lib. de Patientia.*
c. 14. torn, bruised, racked, and miserably

handled. It was Resolution made *Job*
 * *Job. c. 2.* bear his Losses, and Ulcers, with invin-

cible Magnanimity, and, as * he said, play
 * *Job. c. 2.* with the Worms that bred in his Sores,

and, as they were crawling out, drive
 * *Job. c. 2.* them back into the Holes and Pastures
 * *Job. c. 2.* of his putrified Flesh. It was Resoluti-

on made *David* run through a Troop, and leap
 * *Job. c. 2.* over

over Walls, Psal. 18. 29. It was his Resolution made these Words drop from him, *I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments. I will speak of thy Testimonies before Kings, and will not be ashamed, and I will delight my self in thy Commandments; my Hands will I lift up unto thy Precepts, which I have loved, and I will meditate in thy Statutes,* Psal. 119. 46, 106. And why should not my Resolution prompt me to the same generous Enterprizes? Why should other Men, to purchase an immortal Fame, resolve to lose their Ease, and Lives, and Estates, and all that is dear and pleasing to them here below, and I not resolve to lose my Sins, my Lusts, my Pleasures, to gain an everlasting Inheritance? My Heart is ready, my Heart is ready; a gracious God invites me, a loving Saviour calls to me from the Cross, Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do Evil, learn to do Well; a holy sanctifying Spirit beckons me. The great God, that might laugh at my Calamity, and mock when my Fear comes; because he hath called, and I refused; because he hath so often stretched forth his Hands unto me, and I have not regarded: This great, this tender Father, after all the Wrongs, and Injuries, and Abuses, and Insolences I have offered him, is willing to receive me, provided I'll be faithful to him, run no more after other Lovers, and resign my self to be guided, governed, and directed by him. And can I resist that Love? Can I harden my Heart against these Charms? Can I refuse this Kindness, spurn at his Favour,

slight this stupendous Blessing, and provoke him to swear in his Wrath, *that I shall never enter into his Rest?* No, no! I yield, I render my self Captive; O God, thou seest my Heart, I have no Reservations; I lay down all at thy Feet. Cover my Head in the Day of Battle. Inspire me; I will run the Race which is set before me. By thee will I run through a Troop, with my God will I leap over a Wall. I will pursue mine Enemies, and overtake them; neither will I turn again till I have consumed them. Behold, they that are with me are more than those that are against me. Behold, the Mountain is full of Horses, and Chariots of Fire round about *Elisha*. The Lord is with me, the God of *Jacob* is my Refuge. I am convinced that God's Service is perfect Freedom. He that enters upon it, is under the Government of a lawful Prince; his Life is sweet and easie, he feels no Tyranny, no Oppression; the King with everlasting Kindness visits him, and guides his Feet into the Ways of Peace; gives his Angels charge to keep him in his going out, and in his coming in, and will not suffer any of his Bones to be broken. He is with him in Distress, and when he weeps, *holds a Bottle under to catch his Tears*, Psal 56. 8. He binds up his Wounds, and is a Wall of Brass to him, a Wall that stands firm under the Flashes of Hell, and dashes all the fiery Darts of the Devil. He covers him with his Feathers, and his Truth is his Shield and Buckler. His Eyes watch over him, and his Ears are open to his Prayers. He protects him from the Pestilence that walks in Darkness, and from the Destruction that walks

walks at Noon-day. His Groanings are not hid from him, and he preserves him in all his Ways. He takes Notice of his Work and Labour of Love, and there is a Book of Remembrance written before him, for them that fear the Lord, and think upon his Name. Here Men are free from slavish Fear, as being under the Wings of a Father. Here nothing but Love rules in their Hearts, which makes their Yoke easie, and their Burthen light; makes the straight Gate pleasant, and the narrow Way full of Delight and Satisfaction. Here Peace of Conscience reigns; a Peace which is not procured by Riches or Plenty, or the World's deceitful Glory, or a Multitude of Children, or Strength of Body; a Peace, which kills the Worm within, and frees the Soul from her Poison of Grief and Sorrow; a Peace, which purifies the Mind from all Uncleanneſs, and is a Bed of Roses, enriched by Showers from above; a Peace, which is most truly God's Banqueting-house, Christ's Palace, and the Habitation of the Holy Ghost; a Peace which is felt on Earth, yet tastes already of Heaven; a Peace which fills the Soul with greater Joy, than *Jacob's* coming from the Field did the amorous *Rachel*, or *Joseph's* being alive, the Heart of the aged Patriarch. Here Men sit quiet under their own Vine, and under their own Fig-tree, and the Subjects of this Kingdom are acquainted with Joy in the Holy Ghost. Here they are secure. The Enemy may molest, but he cannot break them. He may show his Teeth, but he cannot bite; he may rage, but he cannot ravish them out of God's Hands. He may raise a Storm, but cannot overthrow
their

their Vessel; set their House on Fire, but cannot consume them; rain Brimstone upon them, but they have a *Zoar* to flee to. Here the Love of God illuminates their Minds, purifies their Consciences, establishes their Souls, makes glad their Heart, and unites them to that Light, which lighteth every Man that comes into the World. Here the evil Spirits of their Sins were cast out, and the Spirit of God enters into them, even the Spirit of Joy, the Spirit of Power, of Love, and of a sound Mind. Here Men are freed from the Curse of the Law, and their Minds are employed in the noblest Contemplations. Here they dwell in *the secret Place of the most High, and abide under the Shadow of the Almighty*. Here I'll fix, here I'll build Tabernacles, for it is good to be here. Away with all Suggestions that would make me unwilling or backward to this Work. Away with all Thoughts that would discourage me. Away with all Imaginations that would possess me with Misconstructions of the Ways of God. Ye are all miserable Comforters, ye seek not the Good, but the Loss and Desolation of my Soul. I'll seek the Things which are above, where *Christ* sitteth on the Right Hand of God; I'll set my Affections on Things above, and not on Things on Earth; I am dead to all these sublunary Vanities, and my Life is hid with *Christ* in God; and when *Christ*, who is my Life, shall appear, then shall I also appear with him in Glory.

Without such Resolutions as these, Consideration is lame and feeble: It is practical Consideration that must do the Work, and it is these Reso-

Resolutions make it so; the Necessity of which Consideration is the next Thing I must endeavour to demonstrate.



C H A P. III.

The absolute Necessity of Consideration, in order to a serious Life. God's frequent Commands to that Purpose. Our Reason, and the Power of Consideration we are furnished or endued with, proved to be given us for this End. Without it, Men have Cause to suspect that their Reformation is Counterfeit.

W HAT we have said hitherto, is not a Thing indifferent, left to our Liberty or Discretion to mind or neglect it as we shall see Occasion. It is not of the Nature of Meat offered to Idols, not of the Nature of a Holy-day, which Men may neglect, or make Conscience of, as they see it expedient, for the edifying of their Brethren. It is not of the Nature of Civil Actions, of buying or selling, of sitting or rising, of staying in a Place or travelling, which are Things left to our Will and Pleasure, and may be used, or superseded, according as we see it convenient or inconvenient. If labouring after a better Life, if endeavouring to get a Share in the incorruptible Crown of Glory, if Attempts to compass the Eternal Felicity of our Souls, if studying how we may be admitted into the Choir of Angels, and enjoy the Society of the First-born which are written
in

in Heaven, if contriving how we may arrive to that Fulness of Joy God hath both revealed and promised, be indispensibly necessary, this Consideration must be so too. If Self-preservation be not a Thing indifferent, Consideration cannot possibly be so: For the great Object of this Consideration is, how we may preserve our selves from being undone for ever: how we may guard our Souls from everlasting Perdition; how we may avoid the second Death; and how we may make our Happiness lasting and durable, Proof against the Gates of *Hell*, and the Assaults of the roaring Lion, which walks about *seeking whom he may devour*,

God, that commands all the Powers of Light and Darkness; and hath the same Power over us that the Potter hath over his Vessel; and hath made us capable of being governed by Moral Laws; and hath created us on purpose to be ready at his Beck; and may force us into Obedience by Plagues and Thunders, if we were loth to be courted by Smiles and Favours: God, who owes no Man any Thing; who gives Life to *all*; who hath made all Things for his Glory; who is in all Places, and *All in All*; who can be present by Vengeance, where he is not present by Grace; who can be felt, but cannot be seen; who holds all Things, fills all Things, surrounds all Things, excels all Things, sustains all Things, and afar off sees all the Dangers we are subject to, and knows what Armies of Enemies lie in ambush, and watch our *Fall*; it is he that peremptorily commands this Consideration. A Sovereign Prince expects to be obeyed,
and

and he that dares refuse or slight his reasonable Command, is justly looked upon as a Stranger to Loyal Principles: And well may God, who is *All-wise*, and can do nothing that is unreasonable, expect Submission to a Precept so great, so good, so advantageous both to Soul and Body, as will appear in the Sequel. *Consider your Ways*, is a Law which God (to shew he is in good earnest) inculcates twice in the same Prophecy, *Hagg. 1. 5, 7. And for that the Dream is doubled, it is because the Thing is established by God*, said Joseph to Pharaoh, *Gen. 41. 32.* The same may we say of repeated Exhortations. And indeed, when the famous *Moses* bids the People, under his Charge and Care, to keep the Statutes and Commandments which God had graciously vouchsafed them, that it might go well with them; and with their Children after them; the great Preparative he requires for this Religious Frame, is Consideration, *Deut. 4. 39, 40.* as if, without this, all Attempts of Obedience were vain, and all Endeavours to serve God in Spirit and Truth, were no more but Water spilt upon the Ground. As if without this, the Thunder of Mount *Sinai*, the Voice of God, the Love wherewith he loved them, the Tendernefs he shewed them, the Signs, the Wonders, the mighty Hand, the stretched out Arm, the great Terror God brought upon the Nations round about them, would be no Motives to Seriousness. It was upon the same Account that *St. Paul*, as quick-sighted as the other, peremptorily tells the *Romans*, That they would never practically approve that good, and accep-

table,

table, and perfect Will of God, without they were transformed by the renewing of their Mind, *i. e.* made a new Improvement of their Minds by Consideration. For Consideration rebuilds the House that is fallen to the Ground, makes the Mind new, removes old Prejudices against a serious Life, and transforms the Judgment into other Thoughts and Conceptions, carries away the Rubbish which oppressed the Soul, and leaves it not till it becomes a new Creature, *Rom. 12. 2.* What can *St. Peter, I. Pct. 1. 13.* mean, when he presses the Christians of those Days to gird up the Loins of their Minds, but this great Duty we discourse of? Consideration, as it is a Convocation of our Thoughts, so it ties and unites those Thoughts to the great Object, the one Thing necessary, and, as it were, girds the Soul, that it may keep within the Rules of the Word of God, and may not run out into strange Desires or inordinate Affections, but be more expedite and nimble in her Travels to the Land of Promise.

The Truth is, from the Mind, as from *Aaron's* Head, the precious Ointment runs down to the Skirts of our Garments. From that Mountain of *Zion* descends this Dew of *Hermon*, for there the Lord commands the Blessing, even Life for evermore. From that holy Hill roll down all those Drops of Gold that enrich the immortal Soul, and from that Store-house comes all the Plenty that makes rational Creatures happy. This is the great Wheel, which sets the lesser Orbs a going, and if it be once impregnated with Principles of Goodness and Seriousness,
and

and these enlarged and spread by Consideration, the Will and the Affections will soon be perswaded to follow that Star, till it brings them to *Bethlehem*, the House of Mercy. In our Civil Affairs, it is the Mind must first be fully perswaded, either of the Necessity, or Convenience, or Danger, or Advantage of Things, before any wise Resolution can be taken; and we may justly conclude, that, in Spiritual Concerns, Men begin at the wrong End, if they do not season their Minds with such Resolutions, as may make a deep Impression on the Will and Affections. For that these may resolve to follow God, and may be ravished with his Love, and apply themselves to his Ways, and may hate every false Path, and detest their former Exorbitances and Deviations, we must necessarily suppose there must be some Spring to feed them, which Spring can be nothing else but Consideration. And, as in Sin, it is the Mind that first represents the unlawful Pleasures of it to the Sinner, and this inflames his Affections; this imbibes the subtle Poison, and spreads it through the grosser Parts, and secretly conveys it to all the Vital Spirits, till the whole Head doth ache, and the whole Heart grows sick. So in its Antidote or Cure, it is the Mind that must be chased with Arguments, which may render the Sin Detestable, Odious, and Prejudicial to Soul and Body; and this will soon put the Affections into a holy Rage to secure God's Favour. Which was the Reason, no doubt, why that Father left his Estate and Money to his Son, with this Condition, That he should every Day *Think* a Quarter of an Hour;

Hour ; because he knew that would at last, by the Grace of God, work upon the Will, and engage the Affections to embrace a nobler Object.

And because the more Objects, the more Flowers this Consideration feeds upon, the more effectual it is, and the greater Seriousness it produces, the more signal Change it works : The Holy Ghost therefore, in order to this End, particularizes several Things, and commands them to be taken in as Promoters of this excellent Work. Hence it is that we are sometimes called upon to consider our latter End, *Deut.* 32. 29. because the Man that thinks much of his Death, is most likely to die to the Vanities of the World ; and to value those Things at a very low Rate, which when he comes to die, can give him no solid Satisfaction. Sometimes the Works of God, *Eccl.* 7. 13. because reflecting on their Beauty, Excellency, and the Wisdom of God that shines in them, will oblige us to admire him whose Hand hath made all this, and to pay him that Respect and Reverence which such transcendent Goodness challengeth. Sometimes the Lillies of the Field, *Mat.* 6. 28. that these dumb Creatures may lead us to a spotless Innocence, and enflame our Hearts with a holy Ambition, to be one of those that shall walk with the Son of God in white. Sometimes the last Judgment, or the great Account Men must give of their Works, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil, *Psal.* 50. 22. for this will fright a Man away from himself, make him fight against his Lusts, and walk by Rule, and prescribe Limits to his unruly Passions. Sometimes

times the Testimonies of God, the Sweetness, Beauty, Perfection, Worth and Excellency of them, *Psal.* 119. 95. because they are so agreeable to the Truth imprinted on our Minds, so suitable to the Notions of God written on the Tables of our Hearts, that we cannot but close with them, and take them for our Heritage for ever. Sometimes the future Reward that God hath promised to them that fear him, *II. Tim.* 2. 7. because if our Souls be not judicially stupified, and, in the *Psalmist's* Phrase, as fat as Crease, this will attract them into Abstinence from Worldly Lusts, which war against the Soul. Sometimes the Holy Life, Example, and Christian Constancy and Magnanimity of *Jesus Christ*, *Heb.* 12. 3. because Examples naturally enliven and encourage the Soul to Imitation, and so great a Pattern at once infuses and commands Inclination to follow it. Sometimes God's Correction and Chastisement, together with our Sins, *Hab.* 2. 15. because these represented to the Mind, will shew us our Ingratitude, and how much we are to blame that God's Favour hath made no kindlier Impressions upon us, and how necessary it is to make haste, and remove the cursed Thing that is in the midst of us, that we do not lose our Crown. And all, because the more Candles there are lighted and set up, the brighter the Room will be, and the better the Soul will discover her Spots and Errors, and consequently the greater will be her Earnestness to wipe them away, and remove them.

Nay, of that necessity doth the Holy Ghost make this Consideration, that it seems, God

(such a Lover he is of the Happiness of Mankind) is not at Ease without it. He is forced, as it were, to take human Passions upon him, to express his Displeasure against the Neglect of this Sovereign Medicine. He seems disconsolate, if Men slight this Balm, this Water of Life, this Eye-salve. He calls to Heaven and Earth to mourn with him, because his People will not consider what they are a doing, whither they are going, and what will become of them, *Esa.* 1. 3. He seems grieved and dejected, because they consider not the Operations of his Hands, and what Noble Beings he hath given them; how he hath made all Things subservient to them, on purpose that they might serve him; and adorned the World with that great Variety of Creatures for their Benefit and Use, that they might have the greater Encouragement to offer up their Souls and Bodies as living Sacrifices to his Honour and Glory. How he hath made them but a little lower than the Angels, crowned them with Glory and Honour, and infused Souls into them capable of living for ever, under the beatifical Vision and Presence of Almighty God, *Esa.* 5. 12. He seems to droop; and he that is eternally happy in himself, takes on, as if his Happiness, his Joy, his Satisfaction were interrupted, because Men consider not that he remembers all their Impieties; that he sits on the Battlements of Heaven, and beholds all; that there is not any Creature that is not manifest in his Sight; and that all Things are naked and open unto the Eyes of him with whom they have to do, *Hos.* 7. 6.

Indeed,

Indeed, God is resolved to deal with us as with rational Creatures, not as with Brutes and Engines; as with free Agents, not as with Machines, and Works of Men's hands; and that's the Reason why he is so earnest for this Duty. Without all peradventure, God could force Men into Seriousness; and he that commanded Light out of Darknes, might take the Sinner up in his Arms, and carry him, even against his Will, into that Banqueting-house, the Banner whereof is Love: and might set Men's Souls, as the Workman doth his Clock, that they should not fail of running the Race which is set before them. But then what would our Reason signifie? Why should he make us capable of being wrought upon by Arguments and moral Perswasions? Why hath he given us Faculties to discourse *pro* and *con* of Things, and to argue and debate the Case with our selves? Why hath he given us a Rule to try our Actions by, and Power to judge what is Good, and what is Evil? What can be said for the one, and what can be pleaded for the other? Which Arguments are stronger, and which are weaker? Which are ponderous, and which are of no Value?

If God do nothing in vain, what can we imagine that this Power of Consideration is given for? He that makes a curious Vessel of Gold, doth not intend it for a Trough or Washing-Tub. He that enamels a Ring, doth not intend to throw it upon a Dunghill. He that builds a House, doth not intend it for an Habitation of Owls, and Ravens, and Birds of Prey. He that plants a rich and kindly Fruit-tree, doth not in-

tend it for Timber in a Hog-sty. He that makes a rich Carpet, doth not intend it for Dish-Clouts. And shall I think God more imprudent than Man? Shall I imagine that God hath less Foresight with him than Dust and Ashes? Truly if a Philosopher were to draw Conclusions from Mens Actions, and their Dealings with the Almighty, he could gather no less from what they do, than that they imagine God to be more brutish than the most carnal Wretch living, who never scrapes for Gold, or toils for Riches to buy Pins, or Childrens Marbles with it: For they believe, that God hath given them a finer Spirit than irrational Creatures have, and yet employ that Spirit to no higher Uses, than Beasts do their natural Instinct. Shall God give me an exalted Soul, that can eat Angels Food, and shall I, with *Nebuchadnezzar*, turn it out to Grass? Shall he plant in me an Ability and a Power of Consideration, and intend it for no higher Use than to teach and instruct me how to rake a little Dung together, how to feed a poor corruptible Body for the Grave, and how to wallow with the Swine in the Mire? He that can have such low Thoughts of God, deserves to be banished from all Human Society, and to dwell with Beasts of the Wilderness, must make God the Author of Confusion, ignorant of the Common Principles of Prudence, and less sagacious than some Animals, which, conscious of the nobleness of their Nature, scorn to debase it to the Disorder and Nastiness of the meaner Cattle. And what is this, but to let in Atheism, while we profess our selves to be Christians? God would

would not bestow his Power on me in vain, and if not in vain, it ought most certainly to be employed on Things of the greatest Concernment; and what Things are there of greater Concernment, than turning from the Power of Satan unto God, and laying up Treasures there, *where the Moth cannot corrupt, and where Thieves cannot break through and steal.*

Nay, why should God assure the Sinner that his Impenitence shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, but that he would have him make use of his Reason, and consider the truth and importance of this Threatning; the Uncertainty of his own Life; and how Sin will certainly harden him, if he doth not turn with all Speed; and how soon Ruin and Destruction may seize on him, and how dear his Pleasures may cost him; and how fearful it will be to fall into the Hands of an angry God, whose Patience hath been abused, whose Words have been scorned, whose Thunderbolts have been laughed at, and whose Compassion hath been looked upon only as a Shift or Trick to ensnare Men into rigorous Severity.

Lord God! I am not bereft of my Reason, when I hear the Supreme Governour of Heaven and Earth threaten me; when I hear him, who sits on the Circle of the Earth, denounce Wrath and Indignation against me; I have a Tongue in my Head, and can enquire of Men, wiser than my self, whether this be really the Threatning of God, or no? And whether the great Creator, when he threatens thus, be in good earnest, or no? When the Threatning was pronounced; where delivered; what Persons are concerned in

it; upon what Condition the Threatning proceeds; Whether that Condition be in me; Whether I come under that Judgment? Whether I have Cause to be afraid; and what it is that may justly move me to be so? I have Eyes to read whether there be a Mistake in such Comminations, or no: I have a reflexive Power within me, which enables me to determine, when two Ways are before me, which of them is safest to be taken; and whether the Reasons for my turning from my evil Ways be stronger than those which would dissuade me from it: I have Reason to ponder how many Thousands have, with Shifts and Excuses, and Delays, been the Cause of their own Ruin; and I have Power to reflect, how, that if I am guilty of the same Folly, I shall shortly be wrapt in the same Calamity with them; and what poor, what inconsiderable Comfort it will be, to find those Men Companions in eternal Misery and Calamity, that have been formerly Companions to me in Sin, and offending God. I have Reason and Power seriously to debate, Whether there be a future Judgment, or no; and with very little Trouble may satisfy my self, that Things are so as the Gospel represents them, and that there is no jesting with edg'd Tools. I have Power to reflect, that if there were no more but a Possibility of eternal Torment, if we could strain the Notion no higher than to a *may be*, it would become a wise Man to prepare for the Worst, and to endeavour to be on the sure Side of the Hedge. And having Reason to consider all this, power to Weigh and Ponder all this, and so to ponder it, that my Understanding, thus pos-

sessed,

fessed, may prevail with my Will and Affections
 to resolve for contempt of Sin, and of the World;
 I must necessarily conclude, that God expects I
 should proceed, and come to that Spiritual Life,
 this Way. To have such a Power, and to let it
 continue in an unactive State, to let it be dor-
 mant, and spend and consume itself, and like a
 sickly Person, whose Stomach nauseates the
 wholsom Food the curious Hand hath dressed, to
 let it grow cold and insipid, must needs be a
 great Injury to the God that gave it, and intended
 it should be actuated, and exercised, as are the
 other Faculties, and so great an Unfaithfulness to
 our selves, that in so doing we grow Strangers to
 our Self-love, and become our own greatest E-
 nemies. And let no Man tell me here, that this
 is to make Men independent from God, and to
 assert, that Men may convert themselves, and
 change their own Hearts, and give themselves
 that Repentance and Faith which the Scripture
 every Way asserts to be the Gift of God: For
 God's Power and Glory is so far from receiving
 any Prejudice by this Doctrine, that I know no-
 thing can advance and promote it more than this
 Assertion. 'Tis confessed, that Conversion is the
 Work of God, but then he expects I should do
 my Part, and work according to the Power he
 hath given me, and improve the Talents he
 hath already bestowed upon me, and trade with
 them, and make use of the Faculties I have, and
 exercise them as much as I can, in order to a se-
 rious Change of Life; and in the Use of such
 Means God will be found, as we see in *Cornelius*,
Acts 10. 4. And his Holy Spirit shall come down

and make the Work effectual; and bless those honest Endeavours with Grace and Mercy; and make the Wheels go merrily, which went but heavily before; and turn that Piety which proceeded from Fear of Hell before, into a sincere Love of God, and to the Beauty of Holiness; and make that Obedience universal which was but partial and by Halves before, and that's a kindly Conversion. To indulge our selves in Laziness and Idleness, and Weariness of God's Service, upon pretence that we must wait God's Time, and stay till God is pleased to work upon our Hearts, is no better than mocking of God. And a Man that is fallen into the Water may as well cry, that there he will lie till God by an Angel from Heaven drags him out; as a Sinner that is loth to give over sinning, pretend that he can do nothing till God by some powerful Charm leads him out of that Captivity. As well may we forbear working, and expect Providence will maintain us, as he did *Elijah* by the Ravens, as forbear struggling and striving to get out of the Snares of Sin, till *Christ* by a Voice from Heaven calls to us as he did to *Saul*, Man, Man, why persecutest thou me? For God, who hath protested, that he'll cast none out that will but come to him, and never left himself without Witness, and is engaged by Promise to be a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him; hath no Where in his Word promised to work upon our Hearts, except we will use such Means as he hath given us Power to make use of, in order to a Conversion; and he that lets the Power God hath given him for this Use lie dead, doth but imbezzel

bezzel the Gift of God, and with that unprofitable Servant, lays up his Pound in a Napkin, and consequently can expect no other Answer than was returned to him; *Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked Servant: thou knowest that I was an austere Man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow. Wherefore then gavest not thou my Money into the Bank, that at my Coming I might have required my own with Usury? Therefore take from him the Pound, and give it to him that hath Ten Pounds. And as for those mine Enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, (and it seems such are all those that will not improve the Powers God hath given them, especially this of Consideration, in order to be reclaimed from the Error of their Ways) bring them hither, and slay them before me, Luke 19. 22, 28.*

And indeed, he that can sit down and consider what Losses may befall him, what Mischiefs may happen to him, if he keeps Company with a turbulent quarrellous Man, and thereupon shuns his Society; He that can consider what Terror it will strike into him if he lie in a haunted Chamber, how it will discompose him, how it will break his Rest, what Sickness it may bring upon him, and what cold Sweats the Sight of a Ghost will cast him into, and thereupon will not be persuaded to take up his Lodging there; will find in the Last Day, that he might as well have sat down and considered, what Evil a sinful Life would bring upon him. His Reason, to be sure, is capable of taking the one into Consideration

as well as the other; and he that believes he hath a Soul, must be supposed able to think of Dangers that may befall his Soul: And since Consideration is that which represents all Dangers in very lively Colours, and by that Means affects and makes Impressions upon the Whole Man, there is no Person but may safely expect God's Blessing upon such Considerations; not upon the Account of Merit, but because God hath most freely, and most graciously promised his Assistance, where Men shew their Willingness *to work in his Vineyard*. For God in this Case deals with Men, as a Master with his Servants, who if they husband a little Farm well, is content to let them undertake a greater, and encourages their Industry by larger Concessions.

And that's the Reason why Conversion in Scripture is sometimes attributed to Man, and sometimes to *the Father of Lights, from whom every good and perfect Gift descends*; and why we read in the same Prophet, *Make your selves a new heart, and a new spirit*, Ezek. 18. 31. *And I the Lord will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put within you*, Ezek. 36. 26. Because God expects the Sinner should take his Ways and preposterous Actions, and the Danger which hangs over his Head, into serious Consideration, represent the Odiousness, and Disingenuity, and Unreasonableness of his Sin to his Mind, and muse upon that endless Happiness he may arrive to, Weigh the Comforts and Consolations he may enjoy on this Side Heaven, and God will encourage him, gather the Lambs with his Arms, and carry them in his Bosom, *i. e.* prosper those sincere

sincere Endeavours, and Water them with the Dew of his Benediction, till the Byass of the Soul is changed, and turned towards Heaven. So true is that Saying of Christ, *Matth. 24. 29. To him that bath* (*i. e.* improves the Stock of Grace Providence hath already conferred on him) *shall be given, and he shall have more abundant; but from him that bath not, shall be taken away even that which he bath.*

Consideration is the Bed where the incorruptible Seed is sown, and on the Ground thus prepared, the Sun of Righteousness doth shine, and by his Warmth produces in the Soul *all Manner of pleasant Fruits*, Cant. 7. 13. Consideration, like the *Pool of Bethesda*, draws the great *Angel of the Covenant* down, who stirs the Pool, and gives it a healing Virtue, and immediately *the Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk, and the Lepers are cleansed, and the Dead are raised up*, Mat. 11. 5.

That God hath sometimes by miraculous Means converted, and turned Men from their Irreligiousness and Contempt of Holiness, we do not deny; but though these Miracles might be the Occasion of their Reformation, it was still Consideration that digested these miraculous Providences, and engaged these Men to enquire what they meant, and for what End they were sent, and how they should escape if they neglected so great Salvation. It was this made them argue that as these Calls were great, and full of Wonder, so they challenged Entertainment and Submission answerable to so great a Mercy. It was this made them see the Love of God,

God, and wonder whence it should be, that God should over-look so many Thousands, and knock at their Gates ; pass by Palaces, and be content to take up his Rest in their poor Habitations. It was this made them ponder, that after such Admonitions and Exhortations from Heaven, there was no standing still, and that Contempt of such extraordinary Providences, must needs fall very heavy on the Soul one Day, and sink it into the nethermost Hell ; upon which Considerations and Expostulations, they resolved to close with *Christ*, and with the Terms of the Gospel. Miracles not improved by Consideration would make but little Impression on the Heart, like the Seed that fell upon the Rock ; Piety might suddenly spring up, but for want of Root, would soon wither away. Consideration is that which affects the Soul with them, makes it concerned, cries to Sin to be gone, and astonishes it into Reformation. Hence it was, that the *Jews* who considered not God's Design in the Miracles they saw, remained as obstinate as ever ; whereas had they by Consideration div'd into the Care God took to convince them, there would not have been greater Saints under the Cope of Heaven.

But all this will more fully appear, if we can prove, That without Consideration, Conversion, or Reformation of Life cannot but be counterfeit. Conversion being a Change of the whole Man, and loving God better than the World, or minding Heaven more than Earth, an immortal Soul more than a frail dying Body, there can nothing be imagined, under God, more likely to prevent our being deceived with a Form of Godliness,

lines, than Consideration. That the Devil very ordinarily transforms himself into an Angel of Light, and imposes upon our Minds by Shadows of Virtue; as it is his Interest, so it is a Thing as common as our yielding to Temptations of that Nature. Daily Experience is a sufficient Witness how Men deceive themselves with a varnish and paint of Piety, and flatter themselves that they are ordained to eternal Life, and in a Way to those Regions of Bliss, when they are not: Because they acknowledge and profess that God is Infinite, Perfect, Glorious, and the Supreme Governour of the World, and that in him we live, and breathe, and have our Being; and that it is he that rules the great Wheel of Providence; they conclude they love him better than their Riches or Pleasures here, when they do nothing less; indeed no more but what Parrots may do; which being taught, can repeat the same Words, and be never the nearer that Wisdom which makes Men wise unto Salvation. We see how Men, because they have no Inclination to some gross notorious Sins that other Men are guilty of, are apt to conclude, that they mortifie their Lusts, and put off the Works of Darkeness, walking soberly as in the Day-time; and because they frequent the Temple of the Lord, they are presently true Hearers of the Word. We see how the Harlot, *Prov.* 7. 14. because she had paid her Vows, and had Peace-Offerings with her, persuades herself that she was a great Proficient in Religion; and the *Pharisee* did not think himself a Quarter so bad as the *Publican*, because he paid Tithes of all he had, and was

no Extortioner or Adulterer. Because such a Man is not drunk every Day, but is sober now and then, he believes himself to be a very temperate Man. Another, because he doth not cheat so notoriously as his Neighbours, concludes he is just, honest, upright, and fair in his Dealings. Another, because he works hard in his Calling, and doth no Body wrong, fancies he doth all that is fit for a Christian to do. Another, because he hath sometimes a good Thought of God, and can send up a short Ejaculation to Heaven, is very confident he meditates and contemplates the Almighty. Another, because he hath some faint Breathings after him, knows nothing to the contrary but he is as jealous for God's Glory as any of his Acquaintance can be. Another, because he hath now and then a melancholy Thought of his Sins, and confesses them to Almighty God, concludes he doth repent as well as the best; and because he often wishes for Salvation, and hath a good Opinion of Holiness and Goodness, he doubts not but he is made Partaker of the Divine Nature.

That these are Cheats and Delusions, is evident to any rational Man. If a Mountebank's giving you common Sand for Powder or Pearls, or a Tradesman's selling you Syder for Wine; or a Merchant's selling you *Earthen Ware*, such as is made in *Europe*, for *China*, be a Cheat, then certainly these are Cheats, and the greater Cheats, because they are in Matters of greater Value. The Gospel doth not offer Heaven on these Terms, and it is not partial, but universal Obedience that Christ requires of his Followers. He is resolved
Heaven

Heaven shall cost them more than these little Services come to, and they shall not impose upon God, however they may deceive themselves. But then how shall these, or any other Cheats be discovered and avoided, but by Consideration? True Conversion consists in resisting and conquering such Delusions, but how shall they be resisted if they be not known? How shall they be known, if Men consider not whether the Course they take be either agreeable to the Way God hath prescribed, or like to bring them to that *Happiness* they aim at.

'Tis Consideration must manifest, which is *God*, and which is the *Cloud*, which is *Gold*, and which is but *Gilt*; which are the Waters of *Jordan*, and which are the Rivers of *Damascus*; which is the *Corn*, and which are the *Tares*; which are the *Fiery Tongues*, and which is the *Gloe-worm Light*; which are *Jacob's Hands*, and which are the Hands of *Esau*.

There are not a few Sins which look very much like Virtues; complying with Men's Impieties, look so like Humility; *Absalom's* Hypocrisy, so like Humanity and Civility; *Jacob's* Treachery, so like Friendship and Candor; *Simon Magus's* Falshood, so like true Believing; *Judas's* Covetousness, so like Care of the Poor; Flattery, so like that Charity which bears all Things, and hopes all Things, and believes all Things, and endures all Things; Reviling again when we are reviled, so like doing Justice; Worldly-mindedness, so like providing for our Families; Lying for Profit sake, so like a Work of Necessity, and Self-preservation; and bearing

a Grudge to him that hath offended us, without discovering it in our Actions, so like curbing our Passions, that few Men will think themselves concerned to part with them, except they consider which is the pure, and which is the sophisticate Metal.

How like Saving-knowledge doth that Knowledge of God look, which puffs up the Soul, and tempts Men to despise others that are not arrived to the same Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of *Christ*? There is no distinguishing of them but by the Effects: And how shall the Effects be discriminated, but by Consideration? I cannot avoid being deceived, if I do not sit down and reflect; Lord! I pretend to Knowledge of the Cross of *Christ*, but doth this Knowledge make me humble and vile in mine own Eyes? Doth it discover to me my Spiritual Poverty, and make me prefer others before my self? Doth it make me prize *Christ* above all? And doth it engage me *to count all Things Dross and Dung, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ*? Doth it make me stand under the Cross of *Christ*, and breathe and pant after his precious Blood, like a Man truly sensible both of the Worth and Want of it? Doth it produce that *Mind in me, which was in Christ Jesus*? Doth it fill me with Holy Ardours to be made Partaker of his Holiness? Doth it make me wonder at the Mystery, and Glory in that which to the *Jews* is a Stumbling-block, and to the *Greeks* Foolishness? Dost thou feel this, O my Soul? How happy art thou if thou art sensible of these Operations? Do not deceive thy self; Doth not
this

this Knowledge thou pretendest to, make thee secure and careless? Doth it not make thee sit down contented without the Life of Religion? Doth it not persuade thee to believe that thou art a Christian, tho' thou dost not imitate Christ in his holy Life and Conversation? Does it not make thee proud and self-conceited, and think more highly of thy self than thou oughtest to think, and, like the *Pharisees*, look between Anger and Scorn on those that know not the Law? If so, how is the Knowledge of Christ Jesus in thee?

The same may be said of Faith, 'tis Consideration must separate it from Presumption, and satisfie me whether it be of the true Eagle-kind or no; it is impossible to know whether my Faith be of the right Stamp, without I make such Inquisition as this. Faith is a Gift or Fruit of the Spirit, which I am apt to believe God hath blessed and enriched my Soul withal, and I thank him that I am not born a Heathen, or Infidel. But what Power hath my Faith upon my Affections? Doth it purifie my Heart, and drive away those Lusts that have taken up their Residence there? Doth it make me cut off my right Hand and pull out my right Eye, when they do offend me? Doth it make me live like a Person that believes the Omnipresence and Omniscience of God? Doth it make me, with *Abraham*, ready to offer up mine only Son, Sins as dear to me as the darling Fruit of my Body? Is it of that force in my Soul, that it makes me go contrary to mine Inclinations, and obey God, though I am in danger of losing my Place and Office? Doth

it make me do the Truth, as well as give Assent to it? Doth it make me cautious and afraid of offending that God whom I believe to be of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity? Doth it make me embrace Christ, both as my Redeemer and Governor, both as my Saviour and my King? Doth it elevate my Thoughts, and make me study how I shall advance God's Glory, and do much good in my Generation? Doth it rouse my Soul from her Slumber, and make me look and act like one concern'd and touch'd with a Sense of another Life? Doth it work by Love? And doth it drive me to give God my dearest and tenderest Love? Doth it work by Charity too, by good Works? And doth it make me cast my Bread upon the Water, give away freely and cheerfully, though I have no Prospect, and see no Probability of a Recompence here on Earth? Doth it make me despise the World, and overcome it, and use it only as my Servant, while God alone is my Master? Doth it make me resist the Devil, and *grapple with Powers and Principalities, with the Rulers of Darknes, and with Spiritual Wickednesses in high Places?* Ephes. 6. 12. Doth it make me pray with fervency and importunity? Doth it transport my Soul into Ravishments, upon the Sight of yonder glorious Things God hath laid up, and prepared for those that love him? Doth it make me rejoyce in that Saviour I have not seen, with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory? Doth it infuse Boldness and Courage into my Soul to stand up for God, when I either see his Name prophaned, or see his Creatures fearfully abused? Doth it make me, with

Phi-

Phineas, run in and stem the strong Current of Iniquity, and with *Paul* and *Barnabas*, angry at the improper Honour Men are going to offer me? Does it make me trust God in Adversity, even then when *the Fig-tree doth not blossom, when there is no Fruit in the Vine, when the Labour of the Olive fails, and the Field does yield no Meat; when the Flock is cut off from the Field, and when there are no Herds in the Stalls?* Hab.

3. 17. Doth it make me take Notice of God's gracious Dealings and Providences, and admire God's Wisdom and Greatness, and Power, and Goodness in all? Doth it make me prize the Promises of the Gospel above all Riches, and doth it make me willing to suffer for Christ? Rejoyce, O my Soul, if Faith hath thus warm'd thy Heart, and if thou findest these Footsteps of God within thee! These are Ornaments fit for thee to appear in before the great Tribunal. On the other Side, What Ease, what Quiet canst thou enjoy, if thy Faith be dead, and dull, and unactive; if it doth not touch thy Tongue with a Coal from the Altar, and doth not make thee break forth into Celebrations and Admiration of the Height and Breadth, and Length, and Depth of the Love of God; If thou feelest no Holy Force to shake off every Weight, and every Sin which doth so easily beset thee; If thy Faith does not make thee stand upon thy Watch, and break through all Discouragements and Oppositions, to obtain the end of thy Faith, even thy Salvation; If it doth not make thy Corruptions abate and thy extravagant Desires and Passions fall, if it be so faint that thy Hands grow weak, and thy Knees

feeble, that thy Graces languish, and thy Goodness dwindles away; If thy Sins grow strong under the shadow of it, and the Rod of Iniquity blossoms and bears fruit: If it doth not chase Discontent in a great Measure from thy Thoughts, and doth not give thee Bowels of Compassion to Ministers, to the Servants of God, to Christ's distressed Members; if it doth not drive thee into Heaven, into Contemplations of a glorious Eternity, which shall make amends for all the losses, troubles, perils, miseries and Difficulties thou undergoest here; if it doth not make thee prefer Christ's Honour and Will before the vain Allurements of Flesh and Blood; and the Society of those who delight in God, before Familiarity with the richest and greatest, who casts God's Law behind them; if it works no Patience in Afflictions, no Humility, no Self-denial, no Meekness under Crosses, and Injuries, and Persecutions, no Courage to stand up for God, and for his Glory, no Delight in the Word and Ways of God, no sincere Endeavours to practise what thou hearest, no Relish in Spiritual Things, no holy Revenge upon thy Corruptions, no Indignation against thy former Sins, no Carefulness to please God, no vehement Desires after him who is fairer than the Children of Men?

Faith thus consider'd, if it be but a painted Fire, will quickly betray itself; and Consideration will soon give an *Item* to the Sinner, that this is no good Foundation to build Eternal Salvation on; this will blow away the Chaff, and shew how little good Corn there was in that Rubbish. This will melt all the Dross and Tin
away,

away, and discover how little of the purer Metal there was in the Lump. This will make all the drossie Part evaporate, and let you see whether there be any Thing of Substance at the Bottom. In this manner we are obliged to proceed in our Prayers and Supplications. Consideration must acquaint us, whether it be the Desires of our Hearts, or the Desires of our Lips only, that we offer unto God; whether it be a deep Sense of our Spiritual Wants and Necessities, and of the Greatness, Majesty, Purity, Holiness, Mercy, and Goodness of God that makes us pray; or Custom, and Education, and Civility to our unruly Consciences?

So in our Distributions to the Necessities of others, Consideration must acquaint us, whether we give enough or no; whether we fulfil the Rules Christ and his Apostles have delivered concerning it; and whether it be Vain-glory and the applause of Men, that makes us both liberal, and speak of our Liberality, or an honest Design to advance the Glory of God, and the Good of our Neighbour? Whether that which puts us upon giving, be Compassion and Tendernefs, or a Desire to be rid of the importunate Petitioner? Whether it is our yearning Bowels, or fear of being ill spoken of by other Men, that engages us to such Offices of Humanity.

So in Fasting, Consideration must acquaint us, whether it be the outward Performance we do regard more than the inward Frame of the Soul? Whether it be a real sincere Resolution to mortifie Sin, that engages us to this Severity, or an Intent of giving God Satisfaction for the Af-

fronts we have offered him; and whether the austerity makes Sin truly bitter to us, and works an eternal Destruction of it in our Hearts; or whether it disposes us to fall on afresh, and tempts us upon the Credit of that Piece of Mortification, to venture into new Sins and Enormities?

So in our Zeal for God, Consideration must acquaint us whether we are more passionate in Things which concern the Honour of God, than in promoting of our own Interest; whether it be a Zeal according unto Knowledge, and kindled by the Sun of Righteousness; or furious, and lighted by the Flames of the burning Lake; whether it be Singularity, Peevishness, Spleen, and Malice, that makes us hot, or deliberate pondering of the Affront that's put on the Divine Majesty. And whether we are zealous for the greater, as well as for the lesser Matters of the Law; *for Judgment, Faith and Mercy*, as well as for *paying Tythe of Mint, and Cummin, and Anise?*

Without Consideration, our Souls must necessarily remain under very great Darknes and Mistakes, and consequently run the Hazard of being cheated in the Work of Conversion. How should these Cheats be discovered but by our Reason? How shall our Reason judge of them but by Consideration? For Consideration calls them to an Account, lays them open, examines their Rise and Progress, discovers them to be Dross, and spies out the Danger they involve the Soul in, and by that Means works it into a faithful Resolution to take another Course.



C H A P. IV.

Of the various Impediments and Remora's of Consideration. Men fancy greater Difficulty in it than there is indeed. Are continually employed about sensual Objects. Loth to part with their Sins. Ignorant of the Pleasure of Consideration. Reflect upon the Danger of losing their unlawful Gain. Fear they shall fall into Melancholy, or go distracted with so much Seriousness. Are of Opinion that Conversion, in that Sense the Scripture speaks of it, is needless. Mistake the Nature of Consideration. Are discouraged by evil Company. Neglect consulting with Ministers about this necessary Work. Delude themselves with the Notion of Christ's dying for the Sins of the World.

Consideration, a Duty so Great, so Noble, so Necessary, one would think should find suitable Entertainment with all Men that pretend to Reason, or Wisdom, or Discretion; For in not giving it Respect and Veneration, they call their own Reason in question, disparage their Wisdom, and give just Occasion to their Neighbours to suspect, that Discretion is a Flower which never grew in their Garden: The Guest being so beneficial, who can imagine to the contrary, but every Man will spread open his Doors, and let it in? How! Lock the Gates against a good Angel!

Keep out a Messenger that brings glad Tidings? Darken the Room that I may not see the Sun! Consideration, that directs me how I may be a Friend of God, get room in his Bosom, sing with Angels, triumph with Seraphims, sit at the right Hand of a glorified Redeemer, stand before the Throne of God, serve him Day and Night in his Temple, and be freed from all Possibility of Sin and Misery, from all Discontent and Vexation of Spirit! Is it possible a Merchant of that Worth, and Beauty and Excellency, can want a Lodging! Is it possible, it should fare no better than the GREAT JESUS, be destitute of a Place where to lay his Head? Is it possible Men should deal with it as the Inhabitants of *Sodom* did with the three Heavenly Messengers that entered into *Lot's House*? Quarrel with it; abuse it; offer Violence to it? be angry at its harmless Language; throw their Spleen against that, whose Presence preserves them from being consumed? And which, while it is among them, stays the hand of Heaven, the hand of the destroying Angel, that they perish not? Does not every Man desire to be happy? Did ever any Man hate his own Flesh? Was ever any Man in love with Torment? Is it not every Man's Interest to study how to prevent it? And then sure Consideration cannot but have the Love and Embraces of all Persons, that do not *make Sport with casting Firebrands, and Death, and Arrows*, Prov. 26. 18, 19.

So an impartial serious Man would think, yet to our Grief and Sorrow we find that Men run away from it as from the Plague, and do as carefully avoid it as they would do Ratbane,

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or Sublimate, or Nightshade. This will oblige me in the next place to enquire what are the Remora's or Impediments that make Men neglect this *Panacea*, and, like mad Dogs, shun the Water that would cure them, and slight the Remedy that would infallibly recover them. 'Tis natural for Men to inquire into the Reasons of any Decay. If a Tree does not thrive, if Flowers do wither in the Bud, if a Child do not grow, or if the Water of a River fails, the first Thing we do, is, to enquire where the Stop is, and what the Causes of the Defect are, and why Things do not prosper according to Expectation? And he that hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill, and fences it, and gathers the Stones out of it, and plants it with the choicest Vine, and builds a Tower in the midst of it, and makes a Wine-press therein, may well ask the Question, *Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?* Isa. 5, 1, 2, 3, 4.

The Clogs and Impediments of Consideration are numberless, for indeed 'tis the Devil's Study and Contrivance Day and Night which Way to prevent it. Where a Person dares extricate himself from the Snares of Sense, and venture upon this Work, the Enemy justly fears he shall lose a Subject, and a Soul will be snatcht out of his Clutches, and he shall not be able to hold the Sinner in his *Egyyt*, or hinder him from sacrificing to the Lord his God. He dreads this Land of *Goshen*; and to see People walk that Way, makes him fret and storm. It grates upon his Spirits to behold a Sinner set his Face towards *Jerusalem*, he cannot endure to see the Disciples
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on Mount *Tabor*; An *Isaac*, that's going to meditate, is a Thorn in his Eyes; and being a Spirit that lives upon *Envy*, enjoys his *Malice*, and finds his greatest Satisfaction in destroying Mens Souls; we must suppose he leaves no Stone unturn'd, no Stratagem untried, no Means unattempted, to hinder Men from a serious Recollection of their Thoughts and Imaginations. And no Husbandman can be supposed to set more Traps, or invent more Pit-falls, or devise more Snares for Vermin and rapacious Animals, than this Sophister lays to divert the Stream of Mens Thoughts into a Channel of Contemptible and impertinent Objects.

There is such Beauty, such Loveliness in the Way of God, notwithstanding the coarse outside, that should such a Person by serious Consideration be tempted to lift up the Veil, and see what is behind it; remove the Sackcloth and Ashes, and take a View of that which is underneath; open the Iron Gate, and behold the Gold within; unlock the Cabinet, and see the Jewels there; he would most certainly be ravish'd with the Sight, and not stay one Hour longer *in the Chambers of Death*. This the Devil knows; he is sensible that Consideration is a Tree of Life; therefore lest Men put forth their Hands and take of the Tree, and eat, and live for ever, we may rationally believe he'll cross their Endeavours to the uttermost; so that we may suppose as many Impediments of Consideration, as the Devil can invent Stumbling-blocks to throw in the Way to this Duty. However, let's take a View of some of the Principal.

I. *The fancied Difficulty of it.* I say, fancied, for there is not that Hardship in it Men imagine. But such Enemies are the Generality of Men to their own Happiness, that they will fancy Difficulties in Things they are loth to do; and they therefore cry out, That they are hard, and not to be compassed but with an infinite Deal of Trouble, because they would be excused from the Performance or Practice of them. 'Tis ordinary for School-boys to plead Difficulty of the Task their Master sets them, when they have a greater Mind to play than to learn; much like Solomon's slothful Man, *Prov. 26. 13. There is a Lion in the Way, there is a Lion in the Streets.* Vain Man! there are no Lions but in his own Brain, no considerable Difficulties but what are of his own making. So here, Men fancy that this serious Consideration of their Ways, is a Thing which none but Scholars and Men of Learning can reach, and none are obliged to mind but Men of Letters, and such as are Bookish, and read much, and have large Capacities, are Men of great Judgment, and can wholly give or dedicate themselves to this Study. A Conceit as false as God is true, and which we cannot reflect upon without Indignation. For common Experience refutes it. The meanest Artificers, Men that cannot read one Word, Servants of the lowest Form, the poorest Persons alive, Men whose Fortune is as low as their Learning, do arrive to this Art, and therefore that Plea deserves to be hiss'd at: What is done may be done again; and if unlearned, ignorant, illiterate Men do very often make considerable Progress in it, there

there is no doubt but the Thing is possible and practicable, and there wants nothing but Willingness to master it.

There is no Man that's sensible that Gold is better than Glasses or Rattles, or that Pearls ought to be priz'd and valued more than Pebbles; there is no Man that is capable of apprehending, that Three and Three make Six, or can contrive and plot which Way a dangerous Pond or dreadful Fire may be avoided, but may consider, whether the Things the Scripture speaks of be true or no; whether the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel are Things that belong to him; whether he lives up to the Precepts of Christ, and what will be the Consequence of his Contempt of Mercy, and what may be the means of escaping the Wrath to come; and whether an endless Glory be not infinitely better than a few Hours Pegeantry, and everlasting Enjoyment more satisfactory than momentary Pleasures, and eternal Rest more desirable than a Transitory Titillation.

What Difficulty is there in this Consideration? What Rocks, what Precipices are there here, that must be ventured on to bring it about? I see a whole Street on fire, and am struck into Amazement, and cannot I consider how dreadful everlasting Fire must be? I can consider what a Loss it was to *Job* to be deprived of his Sheep, and Camels, and what is more, his Children, and last of all his Health, and Ease, and Quiet; and cannot I consider what a Loss it must be for me to lose more than all this comes to? I can consider it is worth sitting up late, and rising early, and running up and down, to get a Livelihood; and

and cannot I consider how far more rational it is to sweat, and toil, and labour for an everlasting Inheritance; I can consider with Delight, how much Ease and Content I shall enjoy when such an Estate, I have the Reversion of, doth fall: And cannot I consider, how happy those must be, that after their patient Continuance in Well-doing, shall be possessed of Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, and eternal Life? I can consider how pleasant, how glorious a Thing it is to live in the good Opinion of my Prince, under the Smiles and gracious Looks of my Benefactor: And cannot I consider what a Felicity doth attend them that enjoy the Light of God's Countenance? Here is but changing the Object. And I that can consider how disingenuous and sordid a Thing it is to act against a Man that hath rais'd me out of Dust, and advanc'd me to great Dignity and Preferment; cannot I consider what Baseness and degenerate Ingratitude it must be, to provoke that God who maintains me, and preserves me, and without whom I cannot breathe or move? I that can consider the Reasonableness of Sorrow and Grief where I have offended, and done a signal Injury to my Superior; cannot I consider how just and equitable it is, when I look on that Saviour whom my Sins have pierced, *to mourn as heartily as one that mourns for his only Son?* I that can consider how sad a Thing it is to sit in a Dungeon, deprived of the comfortable Beams of the Sun, and what is more, of the Society of all Lovers and Acquaintance, in an Enemy's Country, where my Food is such as Dogs would refuse to eat, and the Stench round about me
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intolerable, cannot I consider how dreadful it will be one Day to be everlastingly shut out from the Enjoyment of that Light which refreshes the Souls and Bodies of glorified Saints for ever, and to be thrust into a dismal Prison, whence I must come out no more till I have paid the uttermost Farthing? Why should not my Understanding serve me to consider the one as well as the other? Spiritual Things are the most adequate, and most proper Objects of my Understanding. They are the proper Fuel for the Flames that cherishes and feeds it, and makes it rise, and soar to Heaven. Whatever concerns Provision for the Flesh, or this present Life, is but a secondary Object, more by Favour and Permission than by Design. For God's Design in giving us Understandings, was that they might be Receptacles of Spiritual Truths, Store-Houses of invisible Treasures. Contrivances how we may get our bodily Wants and Necessities supplied, for ought I know, may be performed and ordered by Sense alone, without Reason, without this sublime Faculty of Understanding; as we see in Beasts and ignobler Animals, which being Strangers to this Privilege, and directed only by Sense, furnish themselves with Necessaries, Conveniencies, and Superfluities: *Go to the Ant thou Sluggard, consider her Ways, and be wise; which having no Guide, Overseer, or Ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest, Prov. 6. 6, 7, 8.*

But what will not Men call difficult, if they are unwilling to do what they should? How would Houses be built? How would the Field
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be sowed? How should Harvest be brought in, if Carpenters and Husbandmen should pretend Difficulty? If Men will be Droans, Excuses are soon found out. Our Understandings are quick enough to light upon Evasions, and I never knew any Sinner whose Wits would not serve him to reason himself out of a known Duty. And of this Nature is the pretence of Hardship Men alledge. And who sees not that this is but a shift to satisfy their Consciences, that they may not twitch them for the Omission; and they must have some Plea least they should sin bare-fac'd, and seem to affront God without Cause or Instigation. And indeed this Plea is a true Stroak of the Devil; for though the Way to Destruction be far more craggy, and infinitely fuller of Precipices than the Way to Life, (witness Mens breaking through Infamy, the Hatred of their Friends, the Displeasure of their Relations, the fences of Modesty, the scorn of Angels, the Indignation of a consuming Fire, to get at Sin; witness the venturing sometimes their Fortunes, sometimes their Lives, sometimes their Reputation, sometimes the Ruin of their Families to please the Devil;) yet the Broad Way being down, whereas the Strait is up the Hill, his Persuasion prevails the sooner, that the former is infinitely more facile and easie; and thus he asperges and seeks to crack the Credit of this spotless Virgin, *Consideration*, the Joy of Angels, the Envy of Devils, the Off-spring of God; and the great Ladder whereby Men must climb to Heaven, and hard it must be, though nothing be more easie; 'tis a Thing portable, and is al-

ways to be had; 'tis always in season, always at hand, always within Call, no burthen in a Journey, no Load in a Voyage, Men may carry it with them where-ever they go; when they are travelling, when they stay at home; in company, and out of company; when they are walking, when they are sitting down; when they go to Bed, when they rise; they need not run beyond Sea to fetch it, nor revolve many Books to be Masters of it; they need not sail to the *Antipodes* to compass it, nor dig under ground to find it; they need not ransack the *Indies* to enrich themselves with it, nor venture Shipwreck to bring it Home; they need not sell Lands and Houses to purchase it; nor run the hazard of Sword and Fire to secure it; they need not clamber Mountains to possess it, nor wade through Rivers to inherit it; They carry this Treasure in their Hearts, and it must be mere sluggishness if they let it lie there and make no use of it. The Fire is hid under the Ashes, and they need but stir it and blow it, and it will soon flame out; and God hath made the Duty so easie on purpose that Men might not be deluded by the Devil into a Belief of its Impossibility. Strange stupidity! they do not think it hard to carry Talents of Lead, or Mountains of Sin on their Backs, and yet they think Consideration hard; even that Consideration which like a faithful Friend, would tell them how to be rid of that heavy load they bear, a load which would immediately sink them into Hell, but that the Devil puts under his Shoulder, and helps them to carry it, and so they feel it not. They do

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not think it hard to dig into Hell, and yet they think Consideration hard, which would teach them a Way how to quench that Fire. They do not think it hard to be oppressed by a most bloody Usurper, and yet they think Consideration hard, which would shew them how they might shake off that Yoke, which neither they nor their Forefathers were ever able to bear. Look how laborious the Priests of *Baal* are in the Worship of their god! They cut themselves with Launcets till the Blood gush out upon them. They do not think it hard to bleed, yet they think it hard to leave Fornication. The Idolaters, *Ij.* 44. 12, 13. see what Pains they take: *The Smith with the Tongs both worketh in the Coals, and fashioneth it with Hammers, and worketh it with the Strength of his Arms; yea, he is hungry, and his Strength faileth; he drinks no Water, and is faint. The Carpenter stretcheth out his Rule, he marketh it out with a Line, he fitteth it out with Plains, he marketh it out with the Compass, and maketh it after the Figure of a Man, according to the Beauty of a Man, that it may remain in the House.* This they do not think hard, yet think Self-denial in a beloved Passion hard; a true Emblem of all unconverted Sinners in general. They do not think it hard to obey every little Slave, every silly Lust, every common Soldier in that Camp, of which themselves might be the Generals; and yet they think Consideration hard, which would free them from that Tyranny, and acquaint them with a Way how they might be Kings and Priests unto God, and shine as the Stars in the Firmament for ever.

O Men unwise, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken; you that have Courage to meet an Army in the Field, and, to use *Job's* expression, *Have Confidence to laugh at the glittering Spear and the Shield*, *Job* 39. 23. You that have Courage to plow the Sea, to face a Cannon, to mock a shower of Arrows, to stand a Volly of Shot, to fight Duels, to expose your Lives, to lay Siege to a Fort, to endure the Noise of Guns, to hear the clashing of Swords, to lie on the cold ground many Nights together, or to have an Arm or Leg cut off to preserve the sounder Parts of your Bodies; You that have Courage to do all this, and do not think it hard, shall you think Consideration hard? Even that Consideration, that would make you live like Men, and free you from the Rubbish the lapsed Posterity of *Adam* lies groaning under: You that do Things every Day almost much harder, and much more difficult than Consideration is, will you scruple that which may be perform'd with greater Ease, and which you are more obliged to, than adventuring on the Dangers I mentioned?

I]|||II II. *Impediment.*

II. *Love of the World, and being continually employed about sensual Objects.* This is another Impediment of Consideration. And indeed we need not wonder to see Men neglectful and careless of this great and necessary Work, when the World takes up their Hearts, and engrosses their Affections; when we see how all their Plots,
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Designs, Contrivances, Desires are for the World, and when *they mind only fleshly Things*, as the Apostle phrases it, *Phil. 3. 19.* This was well expressed by the ancient Parable, in which a Traveller is represented fleeing from the fierceness and rage of an Unicorn, but as he flees, he falls into a Pit, and rolling down, lays hold on the bough of a Tree, and now thinks himself secure from all Danger. But as he looks about, he beholds Two Moles corroding the Root of the Tree he holds by, and underneath him a Dragon spitting fire, and threatening to devour him: and on both Sides of him four Serpents hissing; and in the midst of all this Danger, some Honey trickling down from the Tree, with the Sweetness of which, and Agreeableness to his Palate, he is so taken and raviſh'd, that he forgets his Fears, and rejoices, though ſurrounded with ſo many implacable Enemies. The Unicorn is Death, the Pit is the World, the Tree Man's Life, the Two Moles Day and Night, the four Serpents the four Elements Man is composed of, the Dragon is the Devil, and the Honey Voluptuousness, or the ſweetneſs and pleaſures of the World.

What I mean by the World none ſhould be ignorant of, that hath either read what wiſe Men have written concerning it, or hath heard the Word of the Goſpel ſounding in his Ears. For indeed 'tis not the leaſt part of our Commiſſion to dehort and diſſuade Men from fixing their Affections on theſe ſublunary Objects, and but that continual inculcating of the ſame Thing would make our Auditors nauſeate the moſt

wholesome Lessons, we could not do them greater Service than by making such Dehortations the perpetual Subject of our Sermons.

All that is in the World, is the *Lust of the Flesh, and the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*, saith the great Divine, I. *John* 2. 16. Whatever outward Object serves to gratifie Sense, Whatever here below is most commonly desired and lusted after, Whatever makes for Satisfaction of the Flesh, or of our sensual Appetite, all is comprehended under this Name.

And indeed it is with these worldly Comforts, as it is with the Garden of *Eden*; some are for Food, some for Trial; some to keep our Bodies serviceable to our Souls; some to prove our Souls, whether they will rest on these broken Reeds, or seek Rest and Acquiescence in him that is the Creator of all. And accordingly the Almighty thought fit to limit the Use of these terrestrial Felicities, and to signifie in his Word, that his Intent in giving them, was, that they should be our Servants, not our Masters; that he designed them as Advantages to us, not Hindrances, in admiring and adoring the immense Goodness and Bounty of God; That he appointed them for our use no farther than they would serve to promote his Glory, and the Eternal Felicity of our immortal Souls. This the Saints of old understood, who therefore were very sparing in the use of these outward Comforts, for fear of being deluded by them into Fondness; Nay, some so dreaded falling in love with these Allectives, that they did totally deny themselves in the use of them, as St. *John the Baptist*, who had

had no House but the Desert, no Chamber but the hole of a Rock; he sowed not, neither did he reap, neither gather into Barns; he used no Wine, no Table, no delicious Couch, no Bed made of the softest Plumes; his Form, his Table, and his Bed-chamber were the cold Ground. His Wild-fowl was Locusts, his Cake wild Honey, the rich Cup he drank in, the Hollow of his Hand, and his Wine was Water of the neighbouring Brook. He took Notice indeed of the Creator's Wisdom in these outward Objects, but was afraid to put them in his Bosom, for fear, like Snakes warm'd by his vital Heat, they should sting him into an Epidemical Sickness. But here we find Men generally live the Reverse of God's Designs and Intentions, and instead of using these visible Comforts in order to a greater End, they make that their Home which was intended only for their Inn, and are for erecting Tabernacles to dwell there, which God designed only as a Thorow-fare.

And to this Unhappiness, proposterous Education, which most Men are subject to, doth very much contribute. For whereas we should be educated into Reason, and a right Apprehension of Things, we are usually educated into Sense and Deceptions; and those that have the Care of us, and should teach us Self-denial in these outward Things, and by that means engage our Souls to fix on nobler Objects, do commonly present us with nothing but sensual Satisfaction. All their Discourses to us are of the World, and of the Magnificence, Greatness, Splendor, and Ravishing Aspects of these out-

ward Gaities; and the first Principles they teach us, are, how to please Sense, and to pamper our Appetite; and though now and then they teach us some little Notions of Divinity, yet it is in such a sensual Way, that it amounts to no more than a Formality and Divertisement, and being a Thing that's taught by the by, it makes little or no Impression upon our Affections. The first Thing we should be taught, should be Poverty in the midst of Plenty, and the Art of being contented without carnal Ease and Satisfaction, of bearing Injuries and Reproaches, of doing Things contrary to our natural Desires, and of despising all Things that make for the pampering of the Flesh. We should be educated into a Love of Sackcloth and Ashes, and doing that which flesh and blood hath the greatest Aversion from. So the ancient Christians taught their Children, and that made them such excellent Saints; but our first Instructions are Things of a different Nature. This fine Coach, and those rich Trappings. This curious Garden, and that commodious Seat. This Necklace of Pearl, and that glittering Diamond. This *French* Dish, and that pungent Sawce. This silk Coat, and that velvet Cap. This Man's stately Train, and the other's splendid Retinue. This Man's Feathers, and the other's costly Vestment. These are the Things we are first of all instructed to gaze on, and to worship.

But whatever Disadvantages Men lie under upon the account of their sensual Education, one would think, when they come to the full Use of their Reason, and are capable of understanding the

the vanity, emptiness, and unconstancy of these lower Objects, and of apprehending that they were only intended as Ladders, to raise them into Contemplations of their great Benefactor in Heaven, when they arrive to this Ripeness of Understanding, come out of their Apprenticeship, set up for themselves, become as it were their own Masters, and enter upon the Possession of that Estate, which before was managed by others: One would think, I say, they should then begin (as there is commonly an Alteration of our Temper, upon the Alteration of our Conditions and Fortunes) to rectify those sensual principles, which their Nurses and Tutors have led into them, and wash away the stains those fond Masters (as indeed Men may be kill'd by Kindnesses, and, like that *Olympian Victor*, be stifled with Poesies) have unluckily imprinted on their Souls.

But alas! there are very few, that having gone thus far, stop, and attempt to captivate their Appetites to the Obedience of Reason and Religion, or seek to elevate their Souls above the Dung and Trouble of the World, according to the intent of their Maker; that most Men sink deeper and deeper into the gulph of sensual Desires, open the Gates wider, make the Door larger for sensual Satisfaction to enter in; nay, if it be modest and loth to enter, compel it to come in, and give their Spirits an Infusion of Carnality; water and keep warm the Seed of Worldly Inclinations, and find out Ways to increase their Thirst; add heat to their Fever, provoke their sensual Appetite to enlarge itself as Hell, and

fearing they have not been sufficiently, or faithfully enough instructed in the Enjoyment of these worldly Felicities, they try Experiments and Conclusions to find out new Satisfactions, and thus plunge themselves into the main Sea, being charmed by the Sun-beams playing and glittering upon the Waters, and curling of the Waves; and the Impressions which were made on the Wax when soft and tractable, remain when it is grown harder; and now by a continual Hurry of worldly Cares and Businesses, which they are content to admit of, they make their Souls the least Object of their Solitude: And were they asked as that prophane Duke, *What they think of Heaven?* 'tis like they would answer in his Language, or think so, or at least act as if they thought so, *That they have so much Business on Earth, that they cannot think of Heaven.* Thus their Spirits become Flesh, and their Souls turn to Earth as well as their Bodies. And the Tincture of Carnality in them is so strong, that like petrefying Waters, which turn all things thrown into them into Stone, or a lapideous Substance, it makes all the Thoughts that come into their Minds subservient to their worldly Interest.

Whence it comes to pass that their Minds being altogether sensual, impregnated with worldly Cares and Satisfactions, and all their Faculties imployed in contriving how to get a greater share of Earth than they have already, or at least to keep and preserve what they have, there is no Room for this Consideration of their Spiritual Estate or Condition. They hearken to nothing with

with any Zeal, or Attention, or Life, that doth not carry either some Worldly Profit or Pleasure with it; and that which charms or wins them, must be the Musick of temporal Interest. As the Wolf in the Fable, being sent to School to learn to spell, could make nothing of all that was said to him but *Sheep*. His Mind still ran upon that, and consequently was hardned againit all other Suggestions.

Consideration how they shall be saved hereafter! there is no Lands to be bought with it, no Mannors to be purchased, no Houses to be built, no Countries to be conquered, no Honours to be got by it. It brings in no Riches, it fills not their Coffers with Gold and Silver, it doth not give them Respect and Credit with Princes and Men of Quality; it doth not cover their Tables with Dainties and Delicacies, it doth not furnish them with Portions for their Children; it doth not feed their Bellies, nor put them into a Condition to lie on Beds of Ivory, or to be clad, like *Dives*, with Silk and Purple; it doth not maintain their great Retinue, nor present them with soft Airs; it doth not provide for their Families, nor keep up their Pomp and Grandeur: Were it such a powerful thing as the *Philosophers-Stone* is fabled to be, and did it enable them to turn their Iron into Gold, and did it make their Trade to flourish, and did it make their Garners full, affording all manner of Store, and cause such Fruitfulness among *their Flocks, that their Sheep might bring forth Thousands and Ten thousands in their Streets*; Did it raise them to the Power of *Senacherib*, to the

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Magnificence of *Nebuchadnezzar*, to the Pleasures of *Solomon*; did it promise a Kingdom, and whisper in their Ears that they should enjoy Ease and Plenty; without all peradventure, nothing should have so much of their Care or Hearts, as Consideration of their Ways: But having none of these Baits, and their Hearts being fixed on the World, they can find no Time for this Exercise. As well may a Worm take Pleasure in the sound of a Fiddle, or a Horse delight in Arithmetick, or an Ox divert himself with the sight of a well ordered Army, as such Men set Time apart for their Recollection; and whatever Pregnancy there may be in the Motives a judicious Person doth alledge, they cannot attend such Motions.

Cannot, did I say? They will not allow themselves Time to retire and consider that they have such things as Souls, or that these Souls are capable of Punishment and Glory, when they shake Hands with their old Companions their Bodies. They think that time mis-spent that is bestow'd upon Consideration of another World, and what Minutes or Hours are taken from their fleshly Satisfaction, or from prosecuting their worldly Concerns, they look upon as flung away.

By worldly Concerns, I do not only mean Business which an Estate, or Trade, or Family, or Office, or sensual Pleasures cause, but Business of Study and Learning too; and one may be as much taken up with his Study, as another is with his Trade, and consequently be very loth to allow any Time for this Consideration we speak of. To be studious and yet inconsiderate,

derate, implies no Contradiction; and a Man may contemplate God, and Heaven, and the whole Creation, and yet not contemplate them in order to a holy Preparation for another Life, or with an Intent to mortifie his Sins and Corruptions, and to imitate God in Holiness, without which it cannot be Consideration; and the best Name we can give it, is an empty Speculation: So that a spiritual Meditation may be but a worldly Business, if that which puts me upon it, be my Profession whereby I get a Livelihood; if that which makes me study and meditate, be temporal Profit, or Honour, or Applause; if it be not undertaken with an Intent to edify my own Soul, as well as the Souls of others; if it be done either to please the Fancy, or to please the gentle Reader, by publishing it to the World.

And indeed, where worldly Concerns fill all the Channels of the Soul, there can be but very little Employment for serious Consideration. A continual hurry of Business sheds Darknes upon the Soul, thrusts out that Eye whereby it should reflect upon itself, and makes it intent only on Things which tickle and please the Flesh; and like *Felix*, when any Motions to serious Consideration arises, replies, *Go thy way for this Time, and when I have a convenient Season I will call for thee*, Acts 24. 25. This, as the *Babylonians* did the Children of *Israel*, keeps Consideration in Captivity, and binds it up in Chains, that it can make no Sallies; and if at any Time it would go forth, like *Jonathan*, to take a View of the dreadful Army of the *Philistines*, checks it,

it, and drives it back into its Prison again, where, like some martial Prince, it lies coop'd up, and its Power and Valour remain unknown to the Enemies, that were it loose, would soon feel its quickness and energy. It fares much with Consideration as with that Prince's Invitation, *Luke* 14. 16. Worldly cares and Businessses, like those Guests, when the Soul feels any Suggestions or Invitations to Consideration, are presently ready with excuses, and a thousand Things are pretended why they cannot come, or stoop to the gracious Message or Vocation; and these Briars and Thorns choke the good Seed that's thrown among them.

Thus Earth keeps out Heaven, and the World, like shutters of a Window, excludes the Light that would irradiate the Room; not but that the Business of our worldly Callings may lawfully be perform'd and follow'd; and *Men ought to work with Labour, and travel Night and Day, rather than be chargeable to others*, II. *Thess.* 3. 8. But where the World is made a God, and fills Mens Minds as well as their Hands, and all the Time that can be got, is spent in imbracing and grasping of it, it is impossible Consideration should find Entertainment there; it is like a heartless Prayer, for that can be huddled up, and requires not much Time, and leaves them as worldly as it finds them, and doth not hinder or cross them in their Fondness to the World, which they are afraid Consideration will do. And indeed they guess aright, for Consideration, as *Theodosius* the Patriarch of *Constantinople* did the Emperor, when a Lesson out of the Bible

Bible against Images was read, would pull them by the Sleeve and say, *Hear, Sir, and obey.* This would shake their Love, make them unquiet in their Amours, and unsettle their Affections, pull down that high Esteem they have of the World, and make them see that there is not that Beauty, that Glory, or that Happiness in Things below, which their sickly Fancy dream'd of; it would shew them that all these Gaudes are but a Pit covered with curious Flowers, where People may irrecoverably perish, if taken with the treacherous Flowers they smell to, and admire their Odour and Fragrancy. It would shew them the vanity of heaping up Riches, when they know not who shall inherit them; and represent unto them the Folly of flattering their Souls with an *Ede, bibe, lude, Soul take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry, thou hast much Good laid up for many Years.* It would shew them how false, how perishable all these outward Comforts are, and that they have something more than this deceitful World to look after. Consideration, like a faithful Counsellor, would undeceive them in their fond Opinions of this treacherous Friend, discover to them his base Designs, the Mischiefs he drives at under all his Smiles, the Serpent that lies under those green Herbs, and bid them beware of him. Consideration, like the honest *Jonathan*, Jer. 40. 14, 15. who told *Gedaliah* that *Ismael* was not the Man he took him for, would open the Cave, and shew them the roaring Lion, and assure them, that the Beast is not so harmless as they are apt to imagine, not so fit to play with as its seeming Safeness would make

make them believe. But such is the Love they bear to the World, that they are jealous of all Things that would subvert their Love, and hate Consideration as an Enemy, because they are afraid it will discompose those Imbraces, and break the League between them and these earthly Satisfaction, and put their Hearts, that lie close to the World, out of their Place, disposses them of their Earthly-mindedness, and prompt them to lay up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, and lay hold on Eternal Life. A strange Fondness this! which doth not only marry the Heart unto the World, and makes them *Two, one Flesh*, but sends out Spies to watch against all the Endeavours of this faithful Monitor, *viz.* Consideration, that it may not break the Match, or dissolve the Bond, or make the Heart sensible of its Adulteries.

O God! how is thy Similitude in Man defaced! How is that Glorious Image thou didst once shed into his Breast, blotted and defiled! Is this the Man that received a Soul to mind Heaven most? Is this the Man over whom thou didst spread thy Skirts, whose Nakedness thou didst cover, and with whom thou didst enter into an everlasting Covenant; whom thou dost draw by Cords of Love, whose Soul thou *didst betroth unto thee for ever in Righteousness, and in Judgment, and in Loving-kindness, and in Mercies?* Hos. 2. 19. Is this the Man about whose Creation thou didst consult, and about whose Make the Holy, Blessed and Glorious Trinity entered into deliberation? Who would have thought that
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the Favour would ever have been forgotten, or that this extraordinary Way of forming him would ever have been raz'd out of his Memory? Who would have thought that after this Mark of God's Love, he would have loved any Thing besides God, or who would have expected less than his intire dedicating himself to his Maker after such unusual care and industry of the Deity? False treacherous Man! Is the World become his Master? Is his servant become his Sovereign? And is that which was intended for his Footstool become his Throne, whereon he braves all the Messages of Grace and Pardon? Shall so great a Soul be married to so mean a Slave? So great a Spirit joined to so pitiful a Vassal; And shall that which was designed for him to trample on and despise, domineer, and use him like a Prisoner, put Fetters about his Feet, and shackle his Soul, that it may not return to that Husband to whom it hath sworn Fidelity, and promised Allegiance and Subjection? Unhappy Creature! art thou design'd to judge the Apostate Angels, and dost thou make thy self their Sport? They would dread thee, hadst thou Courage to despise the World, and dost thou make thy self despicable in their Eyes? They would fall at thy Feet and be afraid, as they were at the Sight of Jesus, and dost thou suffer them to ride over thy Head? *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning?* And thou who hadst once Power given thee to *ascend into Heaven*, and, without a Metaphor, to *exalt thy Throne above the Stars of God, to ascend above the Height of the Clouds, and to be like unto the Most High;*

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How art thou brought down to Hell, to the Sides of the Pit? How art thou cut down to the Ground? How is thy Pomp brought down to the Grave? Isa. 14. 11, 12, 13.

III. *Impediment.*

III. *Unwillingness to part with their Sins.* This certainly is the greatest Impediment of Consideration, and the chief Cause of Mens neglecting this most useful Work. Their Consciences, or their Hearts misgive them, that Consideration will discover the Deformity and Odiousness of their Vices, and will put them upon forsaking their darling Lusts; they are afraid it will raise Doubts and Jealousies in their Heads about their present condition, disturb them in their slumber, discompose them in their golden Dreams, drive them from their Softs and Ease, and make their Candle burn dim and blue, which for the present gives a very delightful Shine, and therefore they are loth to apply themselves to it. They look upon it as four Grapes that will set their Teeth on Edge, though in good Truth their Sins are those four Grapes which stupifie their Reason, their Minds, their Understanding, and their Will, destroy their Spiritual Appetite, and render the Bread of Life insipid to them.

I have heard of some rude and savage *Indians*, who being decently cloathed by our Merchants, (for in their own Country it seems they knew no other Ornaments, but dung and guts of Beasts about their naked Bodies) and brought over into *England*, with an Intent to civilize them,
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and make them Instruments, upon their Return, to teach their own Nation Modesty and Decency; as they were walking about the Streets of *London*, and beholding the stately Houses that adorned that goodly City, they were observ'd to sigh and groan, and to look very melancholly; those that took notice of them, charitably believed, that their dejected Looks were no other but Characters of their mourning at their unhappy Countrymen, who were strangers to such Edifices, such Pomp, such Glory, such Plenty, such Magnificence and Gallantry. But being sent over into their own Country again, they quickly betrayed the Reason of their Sighs, and soon discovered that their Melancholy was caused by their being deliver'd from their Nastiness, and beastly Way of living: For they were no sooner come to shore, but they tore off their Cloaths with Indignation, fell about the Necks of their Countrymen with Joy, and betook themselves to their Dung and Guts again, and in these Ornaments they came triumphing to the *English*. There cannot certainly be a fitter Emblem of Sin where Men are enamour'd with it. They delight in their Plague-sores, rejoyce in their Wounds and Bruises, Wounds *not bound up, nor mollified with Ointment*. They are afraid of Plaisters, and do so desire to be let alone in their Misery, that they are jealous of a Cure, and dread a Physician. Their Filth is so pleasing to them, their Itch so amiable, that he that offers to free them from it, attempts tearing of their Bowels from them, and that's it makes them afraid of Consideration.

For indeed, Consideration would Anatomize their Sin, shew them the Venom that's spread through every Part; shew them who that God is, who professes himself offended at it; shew them, that he who is provoked by it, is that God without whom they cannot be happy; whom to forsake, is to be miserable; whom to adore, is to live in joy; whom to serve, is to reign; whom to fear, is to be quiet; whom to know, is to be glorious; whom to love, is to leave all; whom to desire, is to be contented; whom to follow, is to walk in the right Way; who breathed into their Nostrils the breath of Life, and gives them the Meat they eat, the Drink they drink, and the Cloaths they put on; that hath the same Power over them, which the Potter hath over his Vessel, and can create and destroy them at his Pleasure; that sits on the circle of the Earth; and before whom all Nations are as a drop of a Bucket, and are accounted as the small Dust of the Balance; before whom they are nothing, yea, less than nothing, and Vanity; from whom all their spiritual and temporal Mercies do descend; without whom they could not be one Moment out of Hell; who is their best, their greatest, and most constant Benefactor; who lets his Sun shine upon them, and his Rain drop down on their Fields and Pastures; who sends his Holy Angels to watch their steps, and to keep them in their Ways; who hears the Heavens for them, and makes the Heavens hear the Earth, and the Earth to bear the Corn, the Wine and the Oil, and commands all these to relieve them; who preserves them from Danger, prevents their being hurt, and charges all the Elements

ments to spare them; who keeps them by his Providence, supports them by his Wisdom, protects them by his Power, and thinks nothing too good for them, if they will but approve themselves obedient Children, and live like Persons who are sensible of the Obligations of the Highest.

Consideration would let them see, That this God who could undo them, woos them to Repentance, and he that could, as *Gideon* did the Princes of *Succoth*, tear their flesh with Thorns and Bryers of the Wilderness, beseeches them not to stay in *Sodom*; and he that could, as *David* did the *Ammonites*, put them under Saws, and under Harrows of Iron, and under Axes of Iron, speaks to them to Turn, as a Man speaks to his Friend; and that there is nothing in the World God hates more than Sin; and that this is it his Soul abhors, being Holiness itself, and of Infinite Purity. Consideration would let them see, that their Sin controuls the Will and Wisdom of that God, who feeds them; sets up Laws of his own Making, in Opposition to those Commands, which the Holy Angels dare not mention without Trembling. This would let them see the Majesty and Glory of that God whom they do affront; a God who charges his Angels with Folly, and on whose Brightness those blessed Ministers cannot look, without covering their Faces with their Wings, and crying out in Amazement, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts*. A God who covers himself with Light, as with a Garment; Who stretches out the Heavens like a Curtain; Who lays the Beams of his Chambers in the Waters; Who makes the Clouds

his Chariots, who walketh on the Wings of the Wind, who maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flaming Fire. Lift up your Eyes on high, and behold who hath created these Things, that bringeth out their Host by Number, he calls them all by their Names, by the Greatness of his Might.

Consideration would represent to them the various Mercies and Opportunities they do slight, and how hard it will be for them to kick against the Pricks; this would shew them what resisting their own Mercies means, and what fighting against their own Happiness imports; how Blessings slighted will turn to a Curse, and Mercies abused will aggravate their Guilt; how stubbornness makes God weary of shewing Mercy; and refusing to come in while the Gates are open, provokes the Master of the House to protest, That the invited Guests shall never taste of his Supper. How Opportunities of being serious, if neglected, may be snatch'd away, and the Scepter of Grace, if look'd upon with Contempt and Scorn, may never be stretched forth again.

Consideration would let them see what Grief their Sins do cause in Heaven; how they make the eternal God complain; how loathsome, how abominable they make them in the sight of God, and how they treasure up unto the Owners wrath against the Day of Wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. This would shew Christ Jesus on the Cross; How that Beauty bleeds, how that Monarch sighs, how that Conqueror groans, how heavy, how dejected, how dis-

disconsolate sin makes him, how deep he drinks of the Cup of Trembling and Astonishment, and what exquisite Anguish the Sins of Mankind cause in him; how sin puts him to infinitely greater Pains, than the Rack or Gibbet, or a fiery Furnace, or the Wheel; and makes them feel Ten thousand Times greater Torment than the Malefactors felt which were crucified with him: This would bespeak them in the Language of the Prophets, *Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed Garments from Bosrah? Wherefore is he red in his Apparel, and the Garments like him that treads in the Wine-fat?* Isa. 63. 1, 2. This would shew them, that the Blood which trickled down from that Sacred Head, trickled down upon the account of their Follies and Transgressions; that their Oaths, and Curses, and Blasphemies, were the Thorns that prick'd his Head; that their Lasciviousness, and Fornications, and Adulteries, were the Spears that opened his Side; that their Boldness in sinning, their Resolutions to be Damned, made the Tears gush from his Eyes; that their Hatred, their Malice, their Envy, their revengeful Desires, were the Hands that did buffet him; that their Covetousness, and Worldly-mindedness, and Neglect of their Duty towards God and Man, were the Rods that smote him; that their evil Thoughts, and idle Words, and extravagant Actions, were the Furies that spit in his Face; that their Perfidiousness, their Treacheries, their Hypocrisies, were the Nails that were struck through his Hands and Feet; and that their labouring after Hell, their Endeavours to be miserable, their

contempt of the Goodness of God, made him sweat Drops of Blood in the Garden of *Gethsemane*; that their Delight in abusing God, and in trampling on his Laws, was that which made him shriek out to the Amazement of Heaven and Earth, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* That the Heat of their Lusts was the Cause of his Drought, and proved the Gall and Vinegar that was given him to drink; that their sinful Lives kill'd him; and their deadness in Duty murder'd him; that their Impatience and Unbelief haled him to the Cross; and their Impenitence was the Cause of that purple Flood, which the Angels, for the Rarity and Strangeness of it, descended from Heaven to behold.

Consideration would lay before them all the Curses of the Law, the Terror, the Consumption, the Sorrow of Heart, the Anguish that attends sin in the end; the Troubles of Conscience it will raise e'er long, the Frights, the Disquiet it will produce; how it distracted *Francis Spira*, how it disquieted *Richard* the Third; how it discomposed King *Saul*, and better Men than these; how it bowed down *David*, and made him go mourning all the Day long, and roar for the disquietness of his Heart; how it made the Publican blush, afraid to lift up his Eyes to Heaven; how it made him buffet his Breast, and ready to pluck the Hair from his Head. This would represent to them the Flames that *Dives* felt, and made the Wretch cry out for a Drop of Water to cool his burning Tongue. This would shew them what Blackness sin doth cast on their Understandings, and that their being baptized
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into the Christian Faith, doth signifie little, except they leave their Sins; and that they do name the Name of Christ in vain, without they depart from Iniquity. This would shew them their Error in flattering themselves with the Hopes of God's Mercy, and demonstrate to them how ridiculous it is to believe that God will pardon them, because they pardon themselves; or, that he will forgive them, because they are loth to suffer. This would shew them that God sees and hears them, and will judge them, and set their Transgressions in order before them for all the seeming delay of his Vengeance.

Consideration would discover to them the Pardon and Reconciliation they must go without, if they do not speedily return; the Blessings they deprive themselves of, the Comforts they bid Defiance to, the Light, the Favour of God, and the Mercy of Christ Jesus they must for ever want, and be destitute of, if they fly not into his Arms with the greatest Expedition and Alacrity. This would tell them, that if they might light of Salvation, it will be with them, as with one who hath been in want for a long Time, and that Day some great Estate falls to him, he dies, and must not enjoy it; or, as with a Man destitute of daily Food, who is brought into a Room, where are the most delicate Dishes, the greatest Dainties, the most nourishing Meat, the most palatable Dishes, and yet must touch none of them, but go away Empty and Hungry, and starve in the midst of all that Plenty. This would

aggravate their Sins, make them appear in their proper Colours, and shew that they are no better than Cockatrice Eggs, and Spiders Webs. Have you not seen the crafty Spider weave a Net, and then lie in Ambush, till the silly Fly, dazled perhaps with the Curiosity of the Net, hastens to those unhappy Labyrinths; but while she is sporting her self in those Chambers of Death, out comes the Murderer, and leads the Captive Wretch in Triumph home. Consideration would shew them, that thus it is with Sin; and that with much fair Speech, as that Harlot, *Prov. 7. 21, 22, 23. it causes the Sinner to yield; with the flattering of her Lips she forces him. He goes after her straightway, as an Ox goes to the Slaughter, or a Fool to the Correction of the stocks: till a Dart strike through his Liver, as a Bird kastens to the Snare, not knowing that it is for his Life.*

This Kindness Consideration would do them. Thus and thus it would tell them; and this is it Men are afraid of, and therefore care not for entertaining it. Their Sins afford them present Satisfaction, and the Pleasure they promise is brisk and lusty on their Fancies; their Body feels it, their Eyes see it, their Ears hear it, their Tongue tastes it, it tickles all their Senses, it makes them merry and jovial, and makes their Blood frisk and dance in their Veins. It makes them forget their Sorrows, and put the evil Day far from them. It is an *Opiate* that takes away all Sense and Fear, and they are not afraid, though surrounded with the greatest danger; it makes them sing on a Precipice, and laugh while the House cracks,

cracks, and is ready to fall on their Heads. It makes them drunk, and consequently insensible of all those dreadful things which the Prophets and Apostles of God have spoke of; perfectly of the Temper of *Nero*, who plays while *Rome* is burning, and makes merry while the Smoke of the City goes up to Heaven. Frequent Converse and long Acquaintance hath made their Friendship with Sin inviolable. And though it is really the greatest Evil, and the Cause of all Evils in the World; though it murders while it laughs, and poisons while it smiles and cringes; though it is so merciless, that not contented to kill the Body, it attempts the Soul too; yet having like the Prophet's Ewe-lamb, II. *Sam.* 12. 3. been nourished and kept by its Owners for many Years, and being grown up together with them, and having eaten of their Meats, and drank of their Cup, and lain in their Bosoms, and been to them as a Child, the Fondness is grown so great, that nothing can make them willing to part with it. Hence it is, that Consideration is looked upon as a sawcy, ill-bred, unmannerly Messenger, that would part the dearest Friends, divide Sin from their Souls, and cause a Civil War in their Bowels, destroy the reigning Power of Vice, attempt its strong Holds, and storm its Fortifications. They lie encircled in its Arms; and though they hang all this while over Hell-fire by a twined Thread; though God all this while shakes his Rod over them, and while they hug the Sin, is preparing the Instruments of Death, and whetting his Sword, and bending his Bow, and making it ready;

ready; yet it seems such is the present Heart-ease Sin affords, so sweet is the Sleep it yields, that Men care not for being awak'd by Consideration. Unhappy Qualification! Dost thou come to thy Friend at Midnight, and knock, and ask him for three Loaves, and will not the Churl rise and give thee what thou wantest, notwithstanding all thy Importunity? Those Three Loaves, what are they but the Understanding, Will and Affections of the forlorn Sinner? And will he part with none of these to relieve thy Necessity, or rather to relieve his own? 'Thou only wantest them to make him happy, and doth he refuse to give thee Materials to build him a lasting House, which, like the everlasting Hill, can never be moved?

We should wonder to see a Man that's ready to starve for want of Food, refuse the Bread or Meat that's offer'd him; and wonder to see a Person that's ready to perish with Cold, reject the Fire and Cloathing we have prepared for him; and wonder to see one who is blind, scorn the Help of him that would certainly restore him to his Sight; and wonder to see one who is fallen among Thieves and Robbers, make light of the Assistance of a Prince, who offers to rescue him out of their Hands. And dost not thou wonder, O my Soul, at the insufferable Stupidity of sinful Men, that enticed with the Milk and Butter swimming in a Lordly Dish, enter into a Tent, where they will certainly meet with a Nail and Hammer, and yet are afraid of that which would assuredly prevent their being pierced and stricken through
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their Temples? mourn over them, lament their Wretchedness, grieve for them that will not grieve for themselves; call for Rivers of Tears, with for a Fountain of Water. Behold, Sin hath blinded them: Consideration would open their Eyes, but they love Darkeness better than Light. Sin transforms them into the Idols of the Heathen, and makes them that though they have Eyes, yet they see not; Ears, yet they hear not; Hands, yet they handle not; they see not their own Good, they care not for hearing those Lessons that would curb their inordinate Desires, they feel nothing of the Power of God, and do not love to handle the Law. Sin doth expose them naked to the Contempt and Scorn of God and his Holy Angels, and they rejoyce under that Weight. Sin deprives them of the Bread of Life, and their Souls are ready to die for want of the hidden Manna, and they laugh under their Want and Misery. What Changelings doth Sin make Men! How doth it make them feed with Swine upon Husks and Shells! What Tyranny doth it exercise over them, what a *Babel* doth it cause in their Minds! How doth it turn all upside down! How doth it confound, how doth it ruine all! How doth it tear their Hearts! How doth it make the Ways of *Sion* mourn! How desolate doth it make the Soul! What a Cage of unclean Birds doth it make the inward Man! How basely doth it leave the Sinner in the Dark, inso-much that he cannot discern Gold from Lead, Silver from Brass, or precious Stones from common Pebbles, and counterfeit from solid

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Wisdom! Lord! how it doth unman them! how much below themselves doth it make them live! Unto God and his Holy Angels they appear perfectly distracted, as the poor Wretches in *Bedlam* seem to us; only herein their Wretchedness exceeds the others Misery, that they may be released of their Distractedness, and will not; the other if they would, cannot; the former Deliration is voluntary, the other forced; the former hath Malice in it, the other Weakness only; and whereas the latter challenges Pity and Compassion, the former deserves nothing but Wrath and Indignation.

IV. *Impediment.*

IV. *Ignorance of the Pleasure of Consideration*, is another Impediment. 'Tis Ignorance of the Price of Pearls, that makes the Idiot slight them. 'Tis Ignorance of the Worth of Diamonds, that makes the Fool choose a Pebble before them. 'Tis Ignorance of the Satisfaction Learning affords, that makes the Peasant despise and laugh at it; and we see very ordinarily how Men tread and trample on those Plants, which are the greatest Restoratives, because they know not the Virtue of them, and the same may justly be affirmed of Consideration, the Reason why Men meddle no more with it, is, because they are not acquainted with the Pleasantness of the Task.

There is certainly such a Thing as Pleasure of the Mind, and all Delight consisteth not in sensual Satisfaction. We see with what Pleasure
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Men spend their Time in the study of the Mathematicks; the Professors of it could live and die in those studies, and desire no greater Satisfaction on this side Heaven; their Minds are so pleased with that Harmony, Symmetry, Order, and Proportion they spy in Things, that they could dispense with the coarsest Diet, so they might but have leave to enjoy that mental Pleasure. None can be ignorant how the noble *Archimedes* did even forget to eat his Bread, and would hardly allow his Body necessary Refreshment, so much was his Mind taken up with the Pleasure he took in his Angles and Circles! And of *Pliny* we read, that such was the Delight he took in Learning, and enriching his Mind with Knowledge, that he sometimes neglected both his Food and Sleep; Such was the Content that *Demosthenes* took in the Art of Speaking, that he cared not to what Torment he put his Body, to make himself eminent in that Faculty.

And indeed, if Knowledge be a Pleasure; if to be acquainted with our selves be satisfactory; if to discover the impostures, falshood, designs and ambuscades of a dangerous Enemy be delightful, Consideration must needs be so: For this gives us an Insight into our Hearts; lets us see what we are, points at the Nets which are spread for us, and manifests the Temptations of the Devil, which, like Lime-twigs, are design'd to catch us into Death and Ruin. That the Devil, or rather his Emissaries, the evil Spirits that are under his Power and Dominion, are daily walking to and fro, and observing our Actions, and

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Designs, and Behaviour, the Company we converse withal, the Circumstances we are under, our Constitutions, Complexions and Dispositions, and seeking whom they may devour, the Holy Ghost hath made so evident, and

I. Pet. 5. 8. our Experience does so clearly demonstrate, That he that doubts of it must be a Man that's altogether guided

by Sense, and takes Notice of Things no more than the Beasts that perish; These evil Spirits, whenever they tempt, they tempt with a Design to hurt; they try Men to do Mischief, and provoke them to such Actions as may pull down the Wrath of God upon their Heads. And as the Instruments or Engines they make use of in their Temptations are various, sometimes Prosperity, sometimes Adversity; sometimes our own corrupted Hearts, giving them Advantage to spur us on to Sin; so the Temptations vary according to the several Degrees, and Conditions, and Tempers of Men: For 'tis certain all Men will not be dragg'd or seduc'd into Hell the same Way; and a Temptation which will fit one, will not fit another; and a Motion which one will contentedly swallow, will not go down with another; several Constitutions must have several Suggestions, and according as Men change, the Temptation changes, and the Devil takes other Measures. Some abhor him in the Shape of a Lion, to such therefore he is content to come in Sheeps Cloathing; and they that do not like to see him in the Figure of a Goat, shall behold him transform'd into an Angel of Light. So little doth he care
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what posture he assumes, if he doth but prevail with the unprovident Pilgrim. They that are for a bitter Potion, shall have a bitter Potion, and they that are for a sweeter Morfel, shall have it suited to their Palate. *David* cannot be persuaded the same Way that *Saul* is wrought upon, and the Arguments which prevail with the former, are of no great force with the latter. *Paul* is not tempted the same Way with *Judas*, nor *Peter* the same Way with *Herod*. The Drunkards Temptations differ from those of the Abstemious, and the Adulterers from the Suggestions of him that's dull and phlegmatick, and hath no Inclinations to Vices of that Nature. The melancholy Man is oppressed with Imaginations different from those which the merry and jovial meets withal; and we cannot suppose that the Prodigal is tormented with the same Suggestions that the Covetous acts by: 'Tis true, in the End all these Temptations agree, the intended End being Destruction, and offending God; but still they are of different Kinds and Complexions; and how pleasant must it be to see through all these Wiles and Devices of the Devil, a Prospect which Consideration alone can afford! The skilful Gardener pleases himself with the Knowledge of the beginning and end of the Maze or Labyrinth, which the Stranger that comes into the Garden loses himself in. He sees the misguided steps of the unwary Walker, and can tell where he must tread, and in what Order he must go, and where he mistakes his Path, and wherein the Mystery lies, and by what Means he might easily extricate himself from that in-

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chanted Ground; he beholds it and smiles, so must he that by Consideration can see through all the Stratagems of the Prince of Darknes.

There are many Temptations which seem to solicit to Good, when indeed they provoke to Evil. When a Man who wallows in Sin and Uncleanneſs is prompted to truſt to God's Mercy, and to lay hold on the Merits of Chriſt, and to apply himſelf to the Comforts of the Goſpel; the Things he is tempted to are good in themſelves, but the Deſign of the Temptation being to render the Sinner ſecure and preſumptuous, and careleſs of a ſerious Life, it cannot but be a pleaſure to any Man that's ſenſible of his ſpiritual Inter-eſt, to diſcover the Cheat, and this diſcovery is made by Conſideration of the Nature, Deſign and Tendency of the flattering Motion. Men are not only provoked to Commiſſion of Sin, but too often to the Neglect of their Duty towards God, and towards Man. And he that is not tempted to Murder, to Theft, to Adultery, to Fornication, to Contempt of his Parents, to bearing falſe Witneſs againſt his Neighbour; is yet enticed to Idleneſs, to Fleſh-pleaſing, to neglect of Prayer, of Meditation, of Charity, of Faith, of Hope, of Confidence in God, of Zeal, of Fervency, of ſpeaking for Chriſt, of vindicating his Honour when abuſed, of improving his Time to God's Glory, and his own Eternal Good.

The young Man rejoyces in his youth, and lets his heart cheer him in the days of his youth, and walks in the way of his Heart, and in the ſight of his Eyes, hates Gravity and Seriousneſs, and ad-

admits of such motions as these; The Precepts of the Gospel sure were not intended for me, who have Youth, Blood, and Spirit to fit me for Recreations: Can I think God would give me a desire to Things, and not permit me to enjoy them? Why should I believe he would tantalize me make me greedy after the Pleasures of the flesh, and restrain me in the use of them; let the Apples bob against my Mouth, and forbid me to eat of them? Give me a raging Hunger and Thirst for Things of this Nature, and oblige me to starve my Passions? I have heard young Saints make old Devus, and I believe it; for when in their riper Years they reflect what Time they have lost, and how they have spent that Age which was fittest for Pleasure, in retired Devotion; They cannot but turn prophane out of despite, and strive to redeem the Time they have mis-spent in following the Advice of melancholy Scholars. Religion is a Thing fit only for those who are either discontented, or grown weary of the World; for Men who can sin no more, and whom Age hath mortified into forsaking of their Vices. Shall I forbear my Mirth, and amorous Songs, and witty Talk, my Raileries, and modish Accomplishments, for I know not what? Shall I, in the midst of my Bed of Flowers, think of Death, and Judgment? And in a Paradise meditate of Hell, and darken my sprightly apprehensions, with smoak fetched from that fiery furnace? When the World and its Glories smile upon me, shall I make a sullen Face, and furrow those Cheeks with my Tears, which were form'd on purpose to be warm'd with the softer

kisses of the Female Sex? The Men in black speak for their own Interest, and God sure is kinder to Men, than to give them an Appetite to sensual Satisfactions, and then put Bits and Bridles in their Mouths to curb them. What need is there of this haste? And why should I apply my self to a Religious Life so early, when I have some Forty, Fifty, Threescore Years before me, and can shake off my Follies any Time hereafter?

Thus the weak Youngster pleads, and imbraces those motions as Cordials for his sickly Passions, as Elixirs for his heated Blood. Consideration would let him see, That these Temptations are Messengers of the Devil, Threads to lead him into Darknes, into Captivity, into perfect slavery, and none but a Mad-man could forbear rejoicing at so happy a Discovery.

When the gray and hoary Head from his great Age infers the greatness of his Graces, and from the multitude of his Years concludes the multitude of his Virtues; flatters himself, that God loves him, because he hath had little or no affliction in the World; and from his impunity here, draws an argument to prove his impunity hereafter; and sooths himself with God's Favour upon this account, chiefly, because he never discovered his Anger in signal Judgments; and bids his Soul trust to it, that he stands fair in the good opinion and Esteem of God, because his Labours in the World have been crowned with success; and because he hath a Garden of *Eden* here, securely promises himself a Paradise hereafter; and will not be persuaded to the contrary, but that his

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Plenty here is an earnest of a fuller Vintage, and richer Granary intended for him in the Land of *Canaan*; and that his long life on Earth is a pledge of his eternal life in Heaven: What are these but Temptations, which Consideration would discover to be Impostures, and consequently shed both Light and Joy into the Soul?

When the Poor from their outward Condition conclude their Spiritual Poverty, and will needs think they are in a state of Grace, because they are in a state of Want; when they think that *Lazarus* was saved, because he had not wherewithal to subsist; and was admitted into *Abraham's* Bosom for no other Reason, but because he had no certain Dwelling-place; when they imagine that his Sores alone mounted him to Heaven, and the Dogs licking him, was all the motive the holy Angels had to carry him on their Wings; When they argue from their disconsolate Estate on Earth, that they may lawfully neglect the known Duties of Religion; and fancy that they may securely pilfer, because God hath made no other provision for them; and that they shall receive their good Things in the next World, because they received their evil things in this; that they shall be rich in Heaven, because they were destitute of Conveniencies here on Earth: That they must necessarily be Lords hereafter, because they were Beggars here; and shall certainly rejoice in the next Life, because they mourned in this Valley of Tears; and cannot but be blessed for ever, because they had a very large Measure of misery here. When the Rich from their Prerogative on Earth, conclude their Prerogative

in Heaven; and because they are advanced above other Men, think they may use greater Liberty in offending God than others; and because they have greater Estates than the meaner Sort, may therefore sin more boldly, and more confidently than they. When they think their little Charities will waft them over to the shore of an happy Eternity, tho' they feed their Lusts; and fancy that preparation for another World consists in little, but being kind now and then to a needy Man. When they imagine, that a Legacy left to the Poor of the Parish is an Assurance of their Treasure laid up in Heaven; or that their giving something to an Hospital, will palliate their wilful Offences, and throw a Cloak over them that God may not see them. When from their Power they infer the lawfulness of their Extravagancies, and because they can stand it out and brave the World, fancy they may oppress the poorer Sort, and may swear and curse more boldly than their Tenants, and resent, and affront, and revenge Injuries with greater Justice than Clowns and Peasants; When from the Custom of the Age, they infer their Privilege of being more sensual than other Men; because Persons of the same Quality are not, argue that they need not be so cautious or circumspect in their Words and Ways as other Men.

When the gentiler sort of People feel Inclinations in themselves to be ashamed of the Gospel, and to forbear professing any zeal or fervency for Religion in company, where Christ's Blood and Wounds are abused, where God and Heaven are railied, where the Precepts of the Almighty are laugh-

laughed at, and the Gospel turned into ridicule; when they think 'tis enough to say their Prayers, tho' they take great Liberty to talk foolishly; and imagine 'tis needless to keep their thoughts fixed upon God in their Devotion, while they perform the Task they have been used to; when they neglect the Publick upon slight Occasions, and their private Duties for every impertinent Visit that's made to them, and think that God is taken more with outward bowings and cringings in his Service, than with a heart melting at the Consideration of their sins; when they find an unwillingness seize upon their Spirits to reprove either their Equals, or Inferiors, for some notorious Impiety they commit; when they think it below them to pray with their Families, to exhort their Servants to seriousness, and to shew a good Example to those that are under their charge; when they find a disposition to comply with lewd Society, to laugh and smile, and consent to their frothy speeches, and abusive reflections, and to conceal the Truth where it ought to be professed and spoken.

When the Tradesman thinks of putting off his naughty Commodities to the ignorant Chapmen, and of circumventing and deceiving his Neighbour, where his Neighbour understands not what he buys; when he is willing to put off his Devotion upon every trivial worldly business that comes in his way; and to create business, rather than obey the checks of his Conscience, that chides him for not minding his Spiritual Concerns more. When he is loth to do Acts of Charity, because he hath a Wife and Family to maintain, and is afraid

he may want himself. When he thinks that Piety may procure Poverty, and strictness of Life may lose him his Customers, and following the ways of God may make his Acquaintance leave him; and that to be idle in his shop, is better than reading, or meditating, or employing his mind in Contemplations of God's Goodness and Mercy, and the various blessings he hath bestowed upon him.

When Parents are unwilling to correct and admonish their Children, are persuaded to let them take their course, abuse others, and despise those they have a Grudge against. When they are prompted to connive at them alone in their Sins till they grow older, and to indulge them in their undecencies till they arrive to a greater use of their Reason. When their fondness bids them use gentle Means, where more severe Proceedings are necessary, and excuse immodest carriage in them, which they are apt to find Fault with in the Children of their Neighbours. When they are loth to instruct them in the fear of God, loth to initiate them in the Love of their faithful Creator; are apt to be more angry with their Children and Servants for neglecting their Commands, than the Service of God; and apt to be delighted more with their Industry and Pains in temporal Concerns, than with their Attempts in the Affairs of their everlasting Salvation; apter to teach them how to maintain the Punctilio's of their Honour, than assert the Glory of God; and apter to encourage them in vindicating their Credit and Reputation, than in securing the everlasting Treasures, or making their Calling and Election sure.

When

When Children (provided they are able) are loth to relieve their Parents, loth to administer unto them Necessaries; if in want, unwilling to obey those wholsom Counsels which their Parents, guided and encouraged by the Word of God, impart to them; unwilling to imitate them in their Seriousness and Heavenly-mindedness; are apt to obey their Parents more than God, and apt to do Evil because their Parents bid them, tho' God enjoins the contrary; when upon their Parents finding fault with them, they are moved to expose their Infirmities to the Contempt of others; and to call any Thing unreasonable they bid them do, because it agrees not with their present Interest; when they find in themselves an Inclination to mourn more for displeasing their Parents than offending a gracious God; and to be more pleased with the smiles of those which have the Government of them, than with the Light of God's Countenance.

When Servants are moved to backbite and revile their Masters according to the flesh, find an unwillingness on their Spirits to honour the forward as well as the gentle; are apt to be unfaithful to them, to embezzle their Goods, and to wrong them in Things they have committed to their charge; when Thoughts of revealing the Secrets of the Family, merely to sport themselves, arise in their Minds; when they find Inclinations to be industrious in their Master's Presence, careless and lazy in their Absence; to put them off with Eye-service as Men-pleasers, to murmur against the lawful Injunctions, to answer

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again

again if rebuk'd for their Faults, and to conspire against them by way of Revenge.

What are all these Motions and Inclinations, but Temptations of the great Destroyer of Mens Souls? These are some of the Gins and Stratagems, whereby he doth insensibly ruine the greatest part of Mankind: Because they look like our own Thoughts, therefore we suspect no Enemy, and because he mingles his Suggestions with our own Imaginations, and gives them the same Shape, we know nothing to the contrary but that they are friendly Motions; but notwithstanding all this, they are Messengers that come out of the Camp of the *Philistines*, from the Leaguer of Hell; and we may confidently affirm, That whatever Thought, Reason, Argument, Suggestion, Proposition, Imagination, would discourage us from a close Adherence unto God, from a fervent Love to our gracious Redeemer, from earnest Breathings and Pantings after him, from relying on him, and obeying him: and encourage us to any thing that's displeasing to God, or contrary to *Christ's* Rules and Injunctions, or prejudicial to the Honour of God, or to the Welfare of our Neighbour, or to a good Conscience; whether the Suggestion be immediately, like Lightning, shot, and darted into the Mind, or conveyed mediately by our corrupted Hearts, or by the World, or by the Adversary, or by Prosperity, or by good Report, or by evil Report; they are Temptations of the Enemy, which, how plausible soever, design nothing but our decay in Goodness, and in the Favour of God, and the loss of our spiritual Comfort and Refreshment. Con-
fide-

sideration examines the end of all these Motions, and finding out the Mischief they drive at, discovering the Tempest they aim at, it cannot but give great Satisfaction to a rational Man that would not be a Stranger to himself.

Indeed none are more sensible of the Pleasure of this Consideration, than those whom God's Spirit hath raised from the death of Sin, and who have escaped the pollutions of the World thro' Lust. These reflect with more than ordinary delight on the Snares from which they have in a great measure been delivered. And tho' they are still subject to Temptation, yet that which very much contents them, is, that they are not ignorant of Satan's devices. To see all his Workings under ground, to see the steps he goes by, and while he thinks they are blind, and do not mind to arm themselves against them, increases the Satisfaction. Fancy you see *Faux* in the Cellar laying his Faggots in order, digging a hole in the Ground, and laying a Train of Gun-powder, while the Wretch suspects no man takes notice of him. The undiscovered Spectator knows he can crush his Designs in a moment, and therefore with Pity and Pleasure beholds the Industry of the Caitif. They see the windings and turnings of the Enemy, and can laugh at the miserable shifts he uses to deceive them. They see his Goings and his Ways, and can trace the Foe in all his Stratagems. They see his Juggles, and how he teazes the Sinner Day and Night.

Look, O my Soul! look upon yonder Sinner, that hath renounced his Follies, and yet goes drooping under the burthen of his sins. Dost not
thou

thou see the Enemy behind him? The Foe can make him presume no longer, and therefore he seeks to drive him to despair; and he that before told the Wretch of Gardens and Walks and Pleasures, now shews him nothing but Hell, and a burning Lake. He that before represented God to him as a mighty *Sardanapalus*, one that doth not mind such little Things as sins, now sets out God arrayed in a Habit of Vengeance, and as one who doth but watch for an Opportunity to condemn him. He that before gave him Words softer than Oil, now discovers to him drawn Swords; and he that before flatter'd him with Beds of Roses, and Couches of Ivory, and sew'd Pillows under his Elbows, now gives him a Prospect of nothing but Racks and Tortures; and that which before seemed only a harmless Butterfly, now turns into an ugly Toad. He that before made the Burning lighter than straw and stubble, now makes his little Finger heavier than his Loins; and assured him that what seemed but a Cloud before, is all Hill and Mountain now. He that before talked of nothing but Mercy-seats, now changes his Note, and knows of no other Remedies but Tribunals of Judgment. He that before made the silly Wretch believe that God had no Voice but that of Mercy, no Scepter but that of Love, makes God all Thunder and Lightning now.

Judas believes him, and is lost; *Mary Magdalen* sees the Imposture, and escapes; she rests upon Christ's Word, and is convinced that there is no Sin that's capable of true Repentance, but is capable of Pardon too; and that Christ is so far
from

from casting those away that come to him with an humble and contrite Spirit, that the greatest Ease and Refreshment is their Portion. She sees that the poor in spirit have a Right to the Kingdom of Heaven, and that those that mourn shall never be destitute of Comfort. She is sensible how happy that Person is that feels his Heart bleeding and melting upon the account of his former sins, and can make his Bed to swim with Tears. She is sensible the Holy Ghost moves upon these Waters, and that such a Person is indeed baptized with *Water and the Holy Ghost*.

This she beholds, and beholds with Pleasure. Consideration gives her a prospect of the Devil's Subtilty, and her Eyes gush out with Tears of Joy. And certainly if it be a greater pleasure to see, than to grope in the dark; a greater pleasure to know the Precipices I am hurried into, than to have them hid from mine Eyes; a greater pleasure to see the brink of Destruction I do stand upon, than to be ignorant of it; Consideration must be a Pleasure, for this shews me the steep Rock, Temptation; this *Ignis fatuus* would have led me to the Ditch this false Light would have flatter'd me into, the fatal Sea this false star would have seduced me into. This must necessarily fill me with gladness, for it gives me a prospect of the Whirl-pool where the Devil thought to have split my Vessel; the Sands against which I was to have stranded; the Earthquake that should have made me sink into the Ground; and of the terrible Tempest that should have carried me away.

How have I seen a Traveller rejoice, when waking in the morning, he had seen the Water or the
Mine

Mine he must have necessarily tumbled into, if he had gone but one step farther, and had not stopt where he did; How doth he admire the Providence which hath preserved him? And how doth he go on in his way, rejoycing that he hath seen the Gulph he might have rushed into, and escaped it! And, O sinner! dost not thou think thou shouldst rejoyce to find by Consideration, that thy averſeness from Religion, thy backwardness to Devotion, thy unwillingness to spend Time in private Meditations, thy excusations of Sin, thy palliations of extravagant Desires, thy pleadings for Licentiousness, thy apologies for pleasing the Lusts of the Flesh, thy eagerness to run into evil Company, thy desires to wallow in Uncleaness, thy longings after Things God's Word forbids, thy inclinations to Unbelief, That all these are Temptations of the Devil, Corn which that Fowler spreads and scatters before the unwary Birds, to kill and destroy them? Consideration would dismantle Satan, pull off his Mask and Vizard, and convince thee that the sweetness of the Potion is but to make the poison go down more glib; and however the Pill may be gilded, it is but to dazzle thee into love with eternal Ruine. This would tell thee, Look, here was the Cave into which thou shouldst have been dragg'd, and then murder'd; behind this Bush, behind this Temptation, lay the Lion watching thy playing with the Bait. This Device was to have made thee weary of Religion, the other was to have drawn away thy Affections from God. And what Man of Sense can reflect on these hidden Things of Dishonesty he hath escaped, without blessing the
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Almighty, and going on like the Eunuch, *Acts* 8. 39. in his Way rejoicing!

V. *Impediment.*

V. *Danger of losing their unlawful Gain.* It is a Thing not unusual for Men to thrive by Sin, and to prosper by Iniquity; To grow rich by Oppression, and to advance in Wealth by unlawful Callings; To get Money by pleasing other Men in their Lust, and to procure a Livelihood by Injustice, and complying with the Vices of the Age we live in. The Devil must have some Rewards to bestow, else his Kingdom would soon expire; and tho' his Rewards, as well as Temptations, are deceitful, yet Rewards they are, and being present and visible, and consequently apt to make the deeper Impressions, they invite more strongly, and caress Men into Desires and Appetite. Men many Times would not venture on Sin, but that they believe it is the Way to Gain, and the known Road to Advantage and Emolument. And as sin is judg'd to be the Way to Profit, so they look upon it as the only Means to preserve what they have got and acquired.

If *Abshalom* had not had a Kingdom in his Eye, he would hardly have dared to rebel, and Viper like, prey'd upon the Bowels that did feed and nourish him. *Demas* sees how plentifully the Heathen Priests did live, what Credit, what Honour, what Wealth and Glory they enjoy'd, and that makes him forsake Christianity, and embrace their ways. It was Gain made *Demetrius* so zealous

lous for the Worship of *Diana*; and the *Masters of the Damsel* that had a familiar Spirit, so earnest for telling of Fortunes and unlawful Divinations. 'Tis this that makes Thousands comply with Mens sinful Humours; and Unwillingness to lose a Temporal Advantage, makes them jogg on in a Course which perhaps they do dislike. Tell them of their sin, and how dangerous it is; the Answer is, they cannot help it; and because they must not want Bread, they must necessarily continue to offend God. Their Maintenance is wrapt up in their Transgression; and having laid it down as a Maxim, That nothing can be ill that makes for their Profit and Emolument, they defend their sin and their gain together, and justify the one by the other. He that hath but little to live upon in the World, what should he do but seek Support where he can find it? And if Providence cast his Lot among Men that will give him nothing, or stop up the River of their Bounty to him, except he do as they do; flatter their inordinate Desires, and accomodate his Will to theirs, and lye, and swear, and drink with them, and commend their lewder Doings, he must take that Way, there being no other within Prospect.

This, 'tis like, made *Rahab* turn Harlot, and many of the Jews, Publicans and Extortioners; nay, it blinds the Eye; and whatever Men do, looks harmless, where Gain is the Mantle that doth cover it. This made *Hophni* and *Phineas* shame their Profession, and *Felix* pervert Justice. This made *Judas* a Traitor, and the *Pharisees* guilty of most notorious Hypocrisie. Lord!
what

what doth not Hope of Preferment make Men do? And how is all Religion laid aside, where Greediness after Gain begin to engross the Faculties? This made the Jews become Idolaters. And we know who they were that told the Prophet *Jeremy*; *As for the Word that thou hast spoken unto us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatsoever Thing goes forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out Drink-offerings unto her: For then we had Plenty of Victuals, and were well, and saw no Evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out Drink-Offerings unto her, we have wanted all Things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine.* Jer. 44. 16, 17, 18.

And indeed this Principle, that a sinful Life is the only profitable Life, doth so spread and infect the Hearts of Men, that most are afraid to sit down and consider their Ways, for fear Consideration should make them weary of a sinful Life, and consequently make them quit and cashier the gain and profit they do reap by it. Profit is the great Goddess the World adores, and to preserve that, Men employ their strength and friends, and make use of all Opportunities to secure it; 'tis that which they are really jealous of, and which is as dear to them as their Lives, and which makes them climb Rocks, and clamber Mountains, and fight their Way through all Impediments that would oppose and cross it: Touch that, and you touch the Apple of their Eye; and whatever Cause they are zealous for, tho' other Reasons
may

may be pretended, yet Profit and Interest commonly is the true cause that inflames their Passions, and makes their Spirits fervent, and they seldom matter whether it be by lawful or unlawful Ways that they have made their Fortunes, so they be but made and advanced to such a Pitch, they'll be sure to protect what they have purchased; and it is not an easie matter shall snatch it out of their Clutches.

Consideration, that unruly Faculty, would create ill Thoughts of such Gain in their Minds; suggest to them the fate of Men who make Conscience truckle to their Interest, how they make God a slave to Man, and the Almighty a servant to the basest Master, even to the World; Than which nothing can be more contemptible: How by that means they bring in Atheism, and deny God's Being, it being all one, no God, and a God that's subject to the Creature, and how fearful consequently their end must be, their Proceedings being in effect nothing but a Derision of the Deity. And therefore as Men that are loth to meet their Creditors, and when they see them a-far off, turn out of the Way, that they may have no occasion to speak to them; so the Generality of Men do carefully shun Consideration as an unhappy Remembrancer, that will put them in mind of Things they do not desire to hear, and touch the Sore they would not have handled or meddled withal, and search into those Wounds they would not have healed up, or come under the Hand of a Physician. I do but think what a World of Religious Men we should have, how Men would flock to Christ from all Corners,
what

what a number of pious Souls would appear in all places, if we could assure them that a serious Life will for certain furnish them with an Estate answerable to their luxurious Appetite; and I am apt to believe, were Men confident, and could they trust to it, that they should get an Estate of 9 or 10000 *l. per Annum*, by frequent reading, praying, meditating, and Obedience to Christ's Commands, the greatest part would make a hard shift to consider how to leave their sins and Vices, and apply themselves to reformation; we should hear no more of the Excuses they now make, that they have no time, or that their Condition is such, that they cannot serve God as they should. The Impossibilities they now pretend, would all vanish: And they that now rack, and torment, and tire themselves for a little Profit, upon prospect of so considerable an Advantage, would turn their pains and labour another Way, and become very devout Worshippers of the Holy Jesus, and find no such Trouble in a circumspect Life, as they now do. One great reason why the *Jews* did not believe in *Jesus*, was, Because he came without a Royal Train. They expected a *Messias*, that should ride in Triumph, crush the Heathen world, make the rest of Mankind slaves to the Seed of *Abraham*, and enrich all his Countrymen with the spoil of potent Nations: And had the Lord *Jesus* given them assurance, that all of them should have had preferment in his Court, and be put into gainful Offices, whereby they might enrich themselves, their Wives and Children, and live at their ease to the satisfaction of the flesh, and pleasing their sensual Appetite;

where one adhered to him, there would have been a Hundred that would have flocked to his Tent, and very few stood out, or, with the invited Guests in the Gospel, answered, *I pray thee have me excused.*

Should Christ appear in a visible shape from Heaven to the Swearer, or Drunkard, or Fornicator, or Adulterer, or Covetous, or any other of the sinful Herd, with vast glittering Treasures in his hand; nay, could we the Ministers of the Gospel, secure such a Lordship, such a Principality, such a Kingdom, such an Empire, to any of these Sinners, upon condition they would part with their Vices; sure it would be a mighty Temptation to them to shake Hands with their darling Impieties; for I see they sell their Souls to the Devil for 2, 3, or 400 *l.* many Times; and I am so charitable as to think, they would save them for a far more considerable Sum.

'Tis like some would be so brutish, so swinish, so sottish, (and yet but very few neither) that would rather starve, than leave their sins; dwell rather in a Hogsty, than renounce wallowing in the mire of their follies; and live upon Bread and Water, rather than deny their lustful desires; and stoop to the meanest, lowest, and most sordid Condition in the World, rather than bow to the noble Commands of Christ Jesus: But one might engage safely for the generality of sinners, Profit and Riches being the great Load-stone that makes Men willing to do any Thing.

I see how, if a Prince, or other great Person, Men depend upon, or expect something from, dislike such a Sin that they are guilty of, they can forbear

bear it, and comply with their Prince's Will and Devotion. I read of *Theodosius* the younger, how all the Courtiers betook themselves to Religious exercises, when the Emperor and his sister would encourage none but those that did so; and the Court became a kind of Monastery, so strong an Influence had the Emperor's Example, and Will, on all that depended on his Favour. When *Dionysius of Syracuse* applied himself to Philosophy, and countenanced none but Philosophers, most Men, that expected any Grace from him, became Students of *Philosophy*. I see how a Person of Quality can frown all his Family into Seriousness; and the most vicious Servant he hath, for fear of losing his Master's Favour, and the good Place he hath under him, will find a Way, for Profits sake, to subdue his Inclinations, and take leave of a sinful pleasure, since it is so that he cannot enjoy that and his Master's Good-will together: And therefore could we promise Temporal Crowns, and Scepters, and Estates, and were able to perform our Promise, upon Men's quitting of their sins, 'tis very probable Holiness and Seriousness would be mainly embrac'd and follow'd, and what is now out of fashion, would be as much the mode then; and a Person that would not conform to the Rules and Orders of a serious Life, would look like an Antick, as much as he does now that dares be truly Good in a sinful and adulterous Generation.

But seeing all the Divinity we teach cannot increase their Trade, and make their Rocks drop with Honey, and fill their Trunks with shining Clay, they look upon that Holiness we

prefs and recommend to them, as a very beggarly Business, and mind it only on the bye, when they have nothing else to do.

And this it confirms them in their fancy, That a loose and vicious Life is the only gainful Life; a Maxim notoriously false, and which Consideration would soon scatter, were it but called in to do its Office: This would pull them by the Sleeve, and bid them look on the covetous *Ge-baxi*; how he got indeed by Lying, but with his Gain inherited the Leprosie; and how in the same Manner the Leprosie of Sin will cleave to their Souls, harden their Hearts, make them averse from Goodness, and render their Repentance difficult, if not impossible; and how this is but the Devil's policy, by these little things, to rob them of the greater; and deludes them with these dreams, That when the day of the last Judgment shall dawn, they may find themselves the most miserable Creatures under Heaven; how by this their sinful Gain, they arm the Enemy against themselves, and put a Sword into his hand to destroy and kill them; this would represent to 'em, how their Gain, which hath so ill a Foundation, must necessarily be a Moth in their Estates; and how promising soever their Gettings may be for the present, they will soon bring a consumption on their Fortune, and prepare for their greater sorrow and vexation. This would represent to them, how such Gain doth purchase the Wrath of God, and procures Treasures of God's Indignation; how it prognosticates a more plentiful Condemnation, and is a presage of richer flames hereafter. This will lay before them that say-

saying of Christ, *Mat. 16. 26. What shall it profit a Man if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* This would shew them their stupendious Folly, in venturing eternal Torment for a little Trash; and discover to them, how dear they buy their Plenty.

Consideration would let them see, That a serious Life is (in despite of all the suggestions of the Devil to the contrary) the way to the greatest Gain, and yields the most durable Profit, and lays a foundation for Riches which grow not old, and fade not away: That *Abraham's* Faith made him richer than his Possessions did; and that God's saying to him, I am thy Shield, and exceeding great Reward, proclaim'd him more wealthy, than all the Spoil he might have taken when he returned from the slaughter of the Kings; That nothing can be of greater value than divine Love, and that Peace with God is a far greater Treasure than all the Gold of *Ophir*: And Reconciliation by the Blood of Jesus, a nobler Possession, than all the Jewels and Pearls of the *Indian* Monarchs; and that the Apostle was in the Right, when *he counted all Things but loss and dung, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ*, *Phil. 3. 8.*

This would shew them, That Friendship with God, and fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, is worth more than Ten thousand Worlds; and represent to them the groans of the damn'd in Hell, who were they to live over their days again, would sell all they had to purchase this Pearl, and give Ten thousand millions of Gold, if they had them, for his Friendship, because this

Friendship would blow out their Flames, and cool their burning Tongues, which all that Mass of Wealth will not do.

Consideration would lay open all the Riches a serious Life procures; it would let them see that the Intercession of Christ Jesus is entailed upon it; a Blessing inconsiderable in the Eyes of the World, but which Men will one day set a higher Price upon, when it is too late. A Blessing, which neither *Tantalus* his Wealth, nor *Licinius* his Hand, nor *Cleopatra's* Jewels, nor *Agathocles* his Golden Vessels, nor *Cræsus* his Possessions, nor *Crassus* his Demesnes can parallel. To have an Advocate in Heaven, who answers all the Cavils and Exceptions and Accusations of the Devil against our sincere Endeavours, who controuls the rage and malice of the Enemy, steps in while the Foe is arguing against us, shews his Merits, his Wounds and the Marks of his Nails, and makes our imperfect Services pass for current Coin in the Court of the Highest, covers the Weaknesses and Infirmities of our Duties, perfumes our Devotions with the precious odours of his Satisfaction, offers up our Prayers in his Golden Censur, throws his Garment over us, stops the Lion's Mouth that's opened against us, contrives our Happiness, promotes our Interest with God, and pleads, not to cast us away from his Presence, nor to take his holy Spirit from us. What profit there is in having such an Intercessor, none will e'er long be more sensible of, than those who have been destitute of the Benefit of this Intercession; and indeed none share in that Mercy, but Men that dare apply themselves to that
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serious Life, whereof Consideration is the Key.

Consideration would shew them, That this serious Life gains the Assistance and Illumination of God's Spirit. A mercy of that moment, that without it the greatest *Philosopher* is but a Dunce; and a Man lies exposed to all the Insinuations of Seducers; is like the Wave of the Sea, tost to and fro; and his Wine of the Vine of *Sodom*, and of the Fields of *Gomorrhah*; his Grapes are Grapes of Gall, and his Clusters bitter; his Vine is the poison of Dragons, and the Venom of Asps; that is, even his Devotions are Abominations. And indeed to have the Mind so purged, as to see the Vanity and Emptiness of all sublunary Objects, the beauty of Holiness, the odiousness and loathsomeness of Sin, the transcendent Excellency of God, the designs of God's Providence, the Methods of God's Mercy, the Reasonableness and Equity of his Proceedings, and to be so assisted from above, as to dare to oppose the most pleasing Temptations, tho' they charm never so wisely; and to Esteem an Hours Communion with God above all the Preferments and Glories of the World; (for in this manner the Holy Ghost assists those that apply themselves to a serious circumspect Life,) he that sees no profit, no gain, no advantage in this Privilege, may justly be supposed to be quite blinded by the God of this World.

Consideration would let them see, That the Promises of the Gospel, are otherguess Riches than Plenty of Corn and Wine and Oil; That there is no Distress, no Calamity, no Misery, wherein these Promises cannot hold a Believer's

head, and support him against fainting; that these can give content, when nothing in the World can quiet the Soul; and that these can make Men triumph, when they are made as the Filth of the World, and as the Off-scouring of all Things.

Consideration would let them see the unspeakable Gain which attends the serious, sincere, and self-denying Christian when he comes to die; how little is he frighted, how big his hopes and expectations grow; how contentedly he leaves the World; how the thoughts of the everlasting Riches he looks for, support him; how God composes his Spirit with Reflections upon his approaching Rest; how this Death is nothing but a sleep, from which he will in a short time awake again, and open his eyes, and behold the Lord sitting on his Throne, stretching forth the Scepter of his Love to him, and assuring him that the Day of Salvation is come; that the everlasting Spring is at hand, which will make him forget the tediousness of his Travels, the burthens of his former Life, and whatever in this World look'd like anguish and calamity. This would shew them, That the immarcessible Crown of Glory, the Reward of a serious Life, doth infinitely transcend all that the World can imagine to be advantageous and profitable.

Nay, Consideration would discover to them, That a serious circumspect Life, entitles Men to Temporal Gain, as well as to Spiritual and Eternal Advantages. This would shew them, That more Men are ruined in their Estates, by a Vicious, than there are by a Religious Conversation; and that Drunkards, Whoremongers, Adul-

Adulterers, ambitious and quarrellſom Men, break ſooner and oftner in the World, than thoſe whoſe buſineſs is to keep a Conſcience void of offence towards God and Man. This would ſhew them, That this World's Goods are not ingroſſed, or poſſeſſed altogether by Men who ſlight God and their own Souls; but that even many of thoſe who truly fear God, have a very large ſhare in temporal Plenty and Proſperity; and that many Times Men thrive the better for a ſerious Life, and a ſecret Bleſſing attends them, Plenty ſteals upon them beyond Expectation; and, as if ſome good Angel were at work for them, Riches flow inſenſibly upon them, and every Thing they undertake doth proſper, inſomuch that themſelves cannot but wonder at their Increate.

This would convince them that many Men, who during their ungodly Converſation could not thrive, had ſignally proſper'd in the World aſſoon as they have applied themſelves to a ſerious Life, that the face of their affairs hath been changed; That *Manaſſeh*, who had nothing but Trouble and Diſtreſs to attend him while he wallowed in his Iniquities, upon his Return to the God of his Fathers, was brought back unto his Kingdom, and lived in Wealth and Plenty; That *Nebuchadnezzar*, who for his Pride and Inſolence was driven out of his own Dominions by his Subjects; Upon his Sobriety, and acknowledging his Folly, and adoring the God of Heaven, was on a ſudden reſtored to his former Grandeur; and that a ſerious Man is beſt qualified for getting Profit, and encreaſing an Eſtate; and that the Generality of Men had rather deal
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with a consciencious Man, than with a Person who is careless of all things but his own Interest, as knowing that being consciencious, he dares not cheat or deceive them, but will think himself obliged to deal justly and honestly with them, and do by them as he would have others do by him; and that this is the great Misfortune of Ungodliness, and the Glory of a serious Life, that one wicked Man dares not trust another, but both good and bad dares trust him who stands in awe of God, and makes it his great Care and Study how to please him.

This would shew them that the serious Man in being charitable, takes the readiest Way to prosper in his secular Concerns; and that as great a Paradox as it may seem to sensual Men, there is not a greater Truth in the World than that which *Solomon* speaks, *Prov. 11. 24. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.* This would lay before them the Examples of Men, who by consecrating a great Part of their Estate and Incomes to pious and charitable Uses, have enlarged their Fortunes, and by casting their Bread upon the Water, have found it again with Interest after many Days; who have denied themselves in their Superfluities, and yet are grown rich; given away, and yet got more than they had in Times past. This would lead them into the pleasant Field of God's Providence, and shew them how that wise and gracious God wheels and turns Things about for the Good of those that dare trust him for a Recompence, and makes that Money which was laid out for
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the Use of the Needy, return with Advantage and Usury,

A remarkable Example whereof I cannot but alledge upon this Occasion. In *Nisibis* there was a Religious Woman, who had a Man that was a Heathen for her Husband. They were poor, yet by hard Labour had got Fifty Pounds together; whereupon the Husband thought good to put it out to Interest, that they might not spend upon the main stock. His Wife, being a Christian, readily told him, that none paid a greater Interest for Money lent him, than the God of the Christians. The Man pleased with the News, demands where this God was to be met with? The Woman told him at such a Church, where he had Deputies to receive the Sum. They take Money and to the Church they go, where they saw some poor Widows sitting; These are the Deputies of the God of the Christians, said the Woman, who will receive your Money, and pay you Interest. The Man, not much pleased with his Security, yet over-perswaded by his Wife, lets the poor Widows have the Money, who not knowing the Man's Intent, thankfully received it.

A quarter of a year after, the Man finding himself pinch'd for want of Necessaries, bids his Wife go and demand a quarter of a years Interest; to which she replies, that if he would go to those poor Widows, and demand the Use, she did not doubt but he might have it.

He goes and expostulates with these persons; but what he had given them was consumed, and they were so far from paying him Interest, that
they

they were ready to beg more of him; with that he goes sad and sorrowful out of the Church; but in going, spies a piece of Gold, one of those pieces he had given to the poor, which accidentally it seems he had dropt in his Distribution of the Sum upon the floor; he takes it up, goes home, complains to his Wife of the Cheat those poor Widows had put upon him. She bids him trust that God whom he had lent the Money to, and take that Piece he had found, and buy Necessaries for their Family. He goes his way to the Market-place, and among other Things buys some Fish, which were to be dres'd for Dinner.

His Wife opening one of the Fishes, finds in the Belly a precious stone which betrayed its Worth by its unusual glittering. The Man carries it to a Jeweller, who presently gives him Three hundred Pounds for the Jewel, at which the Man transported, falls a praising of the God of the Christians, and himself becomes one, astonished with the Providence which had so miraculously disposed of the second Causes for his signal Profit and Emolument.

Consideration would let them see how various God's Temporal Blessings are, which very often light on the Head of a serious Religious Man; and tho' he had no Trade which stands in need of Augmentation, but a standing Revenue, how yet God may watch over him so, that he shall lose little, and all he undertakes shall prosper; that his houses shall be preserved from fire, and his Cattle from decay; that his Fields shall bring forth plentifully, and his Lands *be as the Garden of the Lord*; that he shall see his Posterity

ty advance in Wealth and Honour, and his Childrens Children grow as the Lilies, and spread their Branches as the Cedars in Lebanon.

Consideration would let them see how a whole Kingdom thrives, where Seriousness and the Fear of God is encouraged with Vigour and Sincerity; What a Darling a serious Prince is to his Subjects, how well they love him, how highly they esteem him, and how plentifully and contentedly they live under his shadow. This would lay before them the Example of *David*, of *Solomon*, of *Hekiah*, of *Josiah*, of *Antonine*, Princes for whom their Subjects would have in a manner pull'd out their own Eyes, and given them to them; The Riches, the Honours, the Triumphs, the Victories, the Caresses of Foreign Monarchs that were heap'd upon them, and all because they did that which was right in the sight of God. This would refresh their Memories, how upon a publick Humiliation God hath been entreated, and the Judgments under which a Nation groan'd, have been averted; and the Heavens, which before were turned into Brass, have visited the Earth again with showers, and the former Scarcity hath been transform'd into Plenty and Abundance; and how God hath seen their Works, that they turned from their evil ways, and hath repented himself of the evil he hath said he would do unto them, and hath not done it.

Consideration would let them see, that though a serious Man should decay in the World, and his Conscientiousness be the Cause of his Ruin, yet he would have more to support him under his Losses than another Man: For how should

not he be able to support himself, that hears the Son of God saying to him, That there is no Man that hath left Father and Mother, Lands and Houses, Brethren and Sisters for his sake, or for Righteousness sake, whether voluntarily or forced to it by Enemies, but shall receive a hundred fold in this Life, that is, in Grace and Comforts of the Holy Ghost, and in the World to come everlasting Life? *Mark* 10. 29, 30. And it could not but be a very great Satisfaction, that it was not any Vice or Licentiousness that broke him, but a good Conscience, which is its own Reward, and the best Preservative against Murmuring, Repining and Despair, and very often a Presage that God will set him up again; and, as it was in *Job's* Case, make the latter part of his Life more prosperous than the former.

By such Representations as these, Consideration will scatter the Suggestions of the Devil, *That a sinful Life is the only gainful and advantageous Life.* But what Argument can prevail against Experience, and where Men have found already that their sins have proved profitable, and that their Carelessness of Religion hath procured them no small Advantages? Their great care and study now must be, that they do not put themselves into a Way of losing them; and therefore exhort them to consider what the end of these Things will be, and whether this be a likely course to get a Title to the Inheritance incorruptible, reserved in Heaven for Believers. They'll be ready to reply, What! part with my Livelihood? Quit that which must support my Family? Would you have me starve and perish?

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Will your Righteousness give me Bread? Would you have me precipitate my self into Ruin? Will nothing less serve the Turn, than leaving all, and following Christ? Why should I despair, when God blesses me; and think ill of my Way of living, when God by prospering my Endeavours, declares his Approbation of my Deportment? My Gain is his Mercy; and if he did not allow of what I did, he would withhold his Benediction. His giving Success to what I do, shews his Love; and I have Reason to believe he is not angry with me for taking this Course, because he never cross'd it by his Thunders. God would have me live in the World, and since I have no other Way to thrive but this, I must suppose it is that which God hath called me to. My Industry is in Obedience to his Command, and why should I fright my self with his Indignation, when my prosperous Fortune speaks his Smiles and Sunshine?

Consideration would let them see, That God doth not bless them for their Sins, but doth it to invite them to Amendment. That though God's Blessings flow in upon them while they sin, yet those Blessings are no Approbation of their Sins, but Dissuatives rather; Marks of God's Beseachings, and Characters of his Entreaties, that they would not be so base and unworthy, as to fight against him with his Mercies, nor make use of his Kindness against him; Signs whereby God lets them know, that he had rather hear their Hallelujahs in Heaven, than their Groans in Hell. Nay, this would suggest to them, That it may not be God that blesses them, but the

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Devil; and that he that is permitted to shew them all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glories of them in a Moment, hath power also to reward Iniquity; and that Prosperity which is acquired by Sin, cannot be of God's making, but is an effect of the Devil's Bounty, who never gives but with an intent to murder; and makes Presents for no other end, but to make the Soul a Prey to his Fury; who gives, like the *Grecians*, only to overcome, and seems kind, only to get an Interest in the Sinner, and to take Advantage against him when there shall be occasion; who Blesses with a design to Curse, and rewards to harden Men in their contempt of the Almighty; who lets Men reap Profit, that they may venture confidently on sin; and is contented they should have something for their pains, that they may dedicate themselves more entirely to his Disposal.

So that it may be said of such a Man's Possessions, as the *Lacedæmonian* in *Plutarch* said of *Lampes*, whom a Gentleman commended for being rich in Shipping; I do not like that Felicity which depends so much on Cords and Threads. Indeed he spake it with respect to the Uncertainty of such Riches; but we may justly call such a Man's Wealth Cords and Strings, in another Sense; Cords which intangle him, and by degrees tye him faster and faster to the Devil's Service; drag him into hardness of Heart and Impenitency, and at last into that Prison, from whence there is no returning, till he hath paid the uttermost Farthing.

But what can you expect from Men that are resolved not to see, and are so wedded to their
Gain

Gain that they are frightened with the very Thoughts of a Remedy that would clear their Sight, and shew them the fatal Hand that gives them their Prosperity, and discover to them the Fiend that conveys the Gain they get into their Houses, and bribes them into everlasting Tor-
tures.

O poor besotted Sinners! And do you lose Heaven for this? Is it for this you leap into Destruction? Is it for this you hazard the Favour of God? Is it for this you scorn the Gold of the Sanctuary? Is it for this that the Riches of Grace and Mercy are vile, and mean, and despicable in your Eyes? Is it for this that you break your Sleep, heat your Blood, discompose your Minds, disorder your Bodies, and alienate your Affections from him, who, being Rich, became poor for your sake? Will not Heathens be your Judges? Will not *Phocion, Fabritius, Fabius, Diogenes, Socrates, Plato, Demetrius, Apollonius*, mere Heathens, who would not accept of the Riches they might have had, and which were freely offered them, lest their Virtue should suffer in the Acceptance, and they be tempted to grow remiss in their Self-Denials.

Would any Man think you had rational, immortal Souls within you, that sees you live thus? Would any Man imagine, that you believe a Reward to come, that sees you greedy after a present Recompence? So greedy, that you fight your Way through Oaths, Curses, Lies, Oppression, Extortion, Injustice, Covetousness, Uncleaness, Blasphemy, Flatteries, Railings,
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Slanders, Abuses, Drunkenness, and through the most sneaking, most fordid, and most disingenuous Sins to get it? To see this, what sober Man would not bless himself? What Man of Reason would envy such Advantages? Pity you, he may, but he can never wish for your Happiness; for that which you call Happiness, is Misery in grain, and must shortly die into endless Lamentations. *Verily I say unto you, You have your Reward,* Matth. 6. 5.

VI. *Impediment.*

VI. *Fear of being melancholy with so much Seriousness,* is another Impediment. And as the Devil ceases not Day and Night to instill this Principle into Mens Minds, so it usually prevails with the Jolly Crew, and such as are all for Mirth and Railery, and hate Sadness as their most deadly Enemy. Consideration they are afraid will strike them in Dumps, and a View of the Odiousness and Loathsomeness of their sinful Life, deprive them for ever of that merry Temper kind Nature hath bestowed on them. Consideration of the Danger, they fear, will put them in mind of the severe Duties of Religion, and suggest something to them that will lie gnawing within, and make them that they shall never enjoy a merry Hour again. They look upon Men abroad, who have applied themselves to Consideration of their Ways, and studied how they shall be happy after Death, and find it hath spoiled their Triumphs, and causes them to walk about discourag'd

rag'd and dejected. They hear of dismal Stories, how People that have been studying Things of this Nature, have been deluded by the Devil, and how some have been drown'd, and others slabb'd themselves: Though it is only an Effect of some Bodily Distemper, which would have happen'd to them had they never thought on Spiritual Objects, yet they are willing to impure it to the austere Rules of Devotion; and tho' the same Argument would hold against greediness after the Riches of the World, which makes some Men come to the Gallows, and others fall into strange Tortures of the Mind, yet they wisely forbear examining the strength of the Argument, lest they should want Pretextes for their Laziness. They see how some that think much of their Salvation, hang down their Heads like a Bulrush, fold their Arms, and spend their Days in Tears and Weeping; They see how uncomfortable Consideration hath made their Lives, how it hath filled their Hearts with Sorrow, and Grief, and Anguish, and they are afraid this will be their Fate; and the Effects it hath wrought in others, fright them, lest they should be as disconsolate as they. While they maintain their jolly Temper, they can live quietly, and with content; and while they have little or nothing to do with those serious Things Divines do talk of, they feel no Disturbance; and why should they meddle with Consideration, which will certainly infuse sad Thoughts into their Minds, and give them Gall and Vinegar to drink? Might not one plead as well, that it is in vain to fortifie such

a Town against an Enemy, for not a few Cities in the World, that have been of no great strength, have escaped well enough; and why should they discompose themselves with fears of an Assault, having been secure so many Years? Why should they now begin to disorder themselves with dismal Presages, or be at the trouble of digging, and building, and raising Fortresses, when they can lie still in their Beds, and indulge themselves, and eat the Fat of the Land?

And are not these excellent Arguments against Consideration? Are not these very lofty and pregnant Reasons, to confute the necessity of so great a Duty? Wretched, deluded Men! Consideration would let you see, that there is a great difference between Melancholly and Seriousness; and that every Man that looks grave and sober, is not therefore dejected, and discomposed within; and that 'tis possible for Men not to rant, and tear, and swagger, and yet to enjoy great calmness and quietness in their Souls. That a Man is not therefore sad, because he will not swear and drink; nor therefore Hypochondriack, because his Conscience will not digest those Sins which you can swallow down without chewing.

Consideration would let you see, That you, who allow your selves in Sin and Vanity, of all Men have least Reason to be merry; who have the King immortal and invisible for your Enemy, and the Blood of *Jesus Christ* speaking against you, and God's Spirit bearing witness of your Disobedience, and know not how soon God will open the Floodgates of his Anger, and how soon your Portion will be in outer Darkneſs; who
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have no Title to the Benefits of Christ's Passion, and are dead while you live; Who have your Understandings darken'd, your inward and outward Man polluted, and your Garments spotted by the Flesh.

Consideration would let you see, That your Joy and Mirth is but slight and superficial, so far from being solid, that oftentimes in your very Laughter your Heart is sorrowful; and as fair as you carry Things outwardly, your Consciences cannot but fright you with an approaching storm sometimes; and as merry as you seem to be, you now and then feel Terrors, which make you flee when no Man pursues you. This would let you see, how short your Mirth and Pleasures are, and how they perish in the very Enjoyment, and are no better than Butterflies; which when you have with great labour and industry got into your hands, their curious Colours decay with a Touch, and you can boast of nothing but a squalid Worm. This would shew you, That your Jollities are much like *Attalia's* Nuptials, whose Wedding-Day proved his Funeral; and like *Philip the Macedonian's* Triumphs, which in a Moment are turned into Sadness by the daring *Pausanias*: This would shew you how weak a thing it is with *Lyfimachus*, for a Cup of cold Water to lose a Kingdom, and to hazard an Eternity of Joy for Mirth, which at the best is but as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew which soon passes away.

Consideration would let you see, That your Mirth is worse than Sadness and Sorrow, because it proceeds from a stupified Soul, and from a

hard heart; from a Soul whose nobler Sparks are oppress'd with Soot and Ashes, and which hath lost its delicate Palate, its refin'd Taste, and is made so insensible of the purer transports of Joy, that it hankers after nothing but Earth, and such drossy, muddy Divertisements, as Men of Reason and Contemplation would scorn, as much as they do the Extravagancies of an impotent Enemy; and that it is rather a Man's felicity to be a stranger to your Mirth, than Unhappiness, because your Mirth is so vain, your Delight so frothy, and your Joy usually hath such a fearful end; an end much like that of *Belshazzar*, who made a Feast to his Lords, drank Wine before them; and to make the Debauch compleat, and to make the Blood of the Grapes drink with greater Briskness, call'd for the Golden Vessels which his Father had taken out of the Temple of *Jerusalem*, as if it encreas'd the pleasure of Drink to prophane those Vessels by Drunkenness which were consecrated to God, and Wine out of a Bowl of the Sanctuary gave greater Life to the Spirit, and revived the Heart more than a common Cup. But while their Hearts danc'd and leapt for Joy, an unknown Hand from Heaven writes the fatal Doom, the Characters of Ruin, and the Lines of Death upon the Wall, and on a sudden, *The King's Countenance changes, and his Thoughts trouble him, so that the joints of his Loins were loosened, and his Knees smote one against another*, Dan. 5. 6.

Consideration would let you see, That your Joy doth not deserve the name of Joy, and that your Mirth is nothing but Wantonness, and how
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much below a great Spirit such Pleasures are; how unworthy of a Man created after God's Image and Similitude; how empty they leave our Souls; and how like the Sea, when ebbing in muddy places, they leave nothing but stink, and filth, and nastiness behind them.

Consideration would let you see, That none can rejoice so heartily as those who make God their Portion, and set the Lord always before their Eyes. For, in this case they may be confident, that not only God, but all his Creatures are their Friends; and that the *Red Sea* which drowns the *Ægyptians*, shall be their Wall and Bulwark; and the Cloud that's Darkness to the sinner, shall be Fire to them; and that tho' God is neither Bread, nor Water, nor Light, nor Clothing, nor Habitation, consider'd by the Rule of Sense, yet he will be all this to them; even Bread to feed them, Water to refresh them, Light to revive them, Clothing to warm them, and an Habitation to defend them from Wind and Tempest. This would shew you, That *Light is shewn for the Righteous, and Gladness for the Upright in Heart*, Psal. 97. 11. And that no Persons in the World have greater reason to rejoice than they, whose great Care and Study is, *First to seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*, as being Persons who are acquainted with a lively Faith, and know by blessed Experience what that Hope means, whereby Men purifie themselves, even as God is pure; and what it is to be strengthened with all Might unto all Patience, and Long-suffering, and what the constraining Love of God implies,

and what it is to be married to him who is altogether lovely, and what it is to have Union and Communion with him.

Consideration would shew you, That peace of Conscience, and Honour with God, and the Spirit's making Intercession for us with Groans unutterable, and Pardon of Sins, Privileges which attend a serious Preparation for a better World, are a continual Feast, and consequently afford Matter for greater Joy than all the Rarities and Curiosities of this present Life. This would let you see, That that one Blessing, pardon of sin, which a serious Man enjoys, is a Mercy which he may justly Rejoyce and Triumph in, more than the greatest Monarch of this World in his boundless Empire; And that neither *Alexander's* Victories, nor *Augustus Cæsar* his Tranquility, nor *Darius* his Plenty, can equal that Rejoycing, or deserves to be compared with it. This would lead your Thoughts to take a View of the present Condition of the unhappy Spirits in Hell, to whom Pardon of Sin would be a greater Comfort and Refreshment, than all the Pleasures of this World distilled into Quintessence: Should a Proclamation be made in that dismal Vault, by some Angel sent from Heaven, that all Prisoners are freed from their Guilt by the new and living Way, even by the Blood of Jesus, and that God hath condescended at last, and is prevailed withal to forgive their Iniquities, what Leaping, what Dancing, what Joy, what Gladness, what exultation of Spirit, what serenity of Face, what a chearful Air would appear in every corner of that loathsome Prison! How would one
Wretch

Wretch jog the other, and bid him break out into Praises and Celebrations of his Maker for so great a favour! How like Heaven would Hell look on a sudden; and all their Howlings, which Grief and Anguish did draw from them, change into Acclamations of Gladness! How would their Hearts swell and dilate themselves, and transport them into an Extasie of Joy! How sordid, how mean, how pitiful, how inconsiderable, would all their former sensual Delights seem to this Pleasure or Satisfaction!

Consideration would let you see, That whatever Men that are become vain in their Imaginations may prate, there is no Pleasure, no Felicity, like that which flows from walking in the Ways of God; and that sin hath trouble and vexation for its individual Companion; That Pride, and Envy, and Ambition, and Lust, and Revenge, whilst they promise ease to the sinner's Mind, do but torment it more; That Goodness is the best Security; That the Joy of the whole Earth, is Mount *Sion*; that in this Garden are the sweetest Roses, the most odoriferous Flowers, the most fragrant Plants; Roses which have no Prickles underneath, like your carnal Delights; Flowers which wither not away, like that frothy Mirth which the laughter of Fools affords; Plants which feed and nourish and heal, and poison not, like those airy Satisfaction which flow from making provision for the flesh. This would represent to your Minds the examples of Millions of Saints, who are able from their own Experience to affirm, That the Ways of Seriousness are truly *Ways of Pleasantness*, and that all her Paths
are

are peace; that they have found more Satisfaction in being Door-keepers in the House of God, than they have done in being Masters of the most glorious Tents of Wickedness; That they have had more joy from Contemplation of Heaven's Glory, and from reflecting on the All-sufficiency of God in one hour, than ever they received from running up and down many Years together, after the things the vain World is enamoured withal; that they would not be in that miserable, unregenerate state again, if they might have whole Kingdoms to entice them; and that there is no Condition in all the World so full of briars and thorns, and anguish, and pain, and inquietness, and trouble, and vexation, as a sinful Life, and an unconverted Estate.

This would set before you the Example of *St. Paul*, who could glory and rejoyce even in Tribulations; and whereas his Enemies could rejoice in nothing but in Money, in Health, in Power, in Honour, in Dignities, in Delicacies, in Silks, in rich Tables: He cou'd rejoice in Shipwracks, in Stripes, in Perils, in false Accusations; and that which appeared terrible to others, shewed pleasant to him; and as bitter as the Root of his Afflictions was, it produced notwithstanding the sweetest Fruits, even the Fruits of Humility and Charity.

This would set before you the joys of *David*, *I will rejoice and be glad in thee*, *Psal. 9. 2.* In thee, not in Voluptuousness; not in lustful Touches; not in curious Tastes; not in precious Odours; not in the Melody of airy Songs; not in the Beauty of a Female; not in the Applauses of
Men

Men; not in Matrimony; not in Children; not in raking Wealth together; but in Thee, who canst make even broken Bones to rejoyce, make the Conscience skip, and the Heart dance for Joy.

Consideration would let you see, That those serious Persons who look dejected and melancholy, have Joys within which no stranger intermeddles withal; and as little shew as they make of Chearfulness, they carry that within their Breasts, which can make their Life a perpetual Jubilee. So far is Consideration from making Men melancholy, that it points at the Things where the greatest Joy is to be found; and as Consideration itself is a pleasure, as we proved before, so it is a Guide to lead Men into such a Paradise, as they would be content to lose themselves in, and desire no greater Felicity on this side Heaven,

VII. *Impediment.*

VII. *Fear of going distracted with poring on things too high for their Capacities.* The averfeness from a truly serious and circumspect Life, in most Men, is so very great, that they'll entertain the absurdest, silliest, and most childish pretences, rather than be perswaded to that course God and his holy Angels, Scripture, Conscience, Ministers, and all the Providences of God do call and invite them to. And such a shift is that we have before us; a Plea so impertinent, that we might justly ask the Question, Whether those that make use of it are not distracted already?

Men

Men had as good give us a downright Answer, and tell us plainly, That they will not take their everlasting State into Consideration, and will have nothing to do with Salvation, as make us conclude so much from their Unsteadiness and Tergiversations. Their Actions shew it, why should they deny it with their Lips? Their works declare it, why should not they confess it? God concludes so much from their Conversation, Why should they love to bear the World in hand, that it is not so? The Heathenish People of *Congo* were honest, who being baptized into Christianity, and understanding afterward that the Religion they had embraced required Chastity, and forbid Polygamy and Lasciviousness, came back to the Priests that had baptized them; and there solemnly renounced their Baptism, alledging, That they were resolved not to part with these Sins; and since the Christian Religion did forbid them, it was in vain to own themselves Followers of that Religion, the Rules of which they were resolved not to observe, or live up to. Here the Priests knew what to make of them, and did never after expect better Things at their Hands. But 'tis otherwise with the generality of Men that call themselves Christians; they love to leave God, and themselves, and their Neighbours in the Dark; and we find they halt between two Opinions, unresolved whether they shall follow God, or *Baal*. They would neither despise God, nor the Devil. The Devil's Favour they keep and maintain by their secret Averseness from a serious Preparation for another Life; and God's Good-will they court,

by

by pretending that they would follow him, were it not for such and such Obstacles and Impediments. And indeed their Flesh does no sooner suggest an Excuse to their Minds, but they presently flatter themselves, That that shift will be a sufficient Apology for Neglect of their Duty. And tho' going distracted with Consideration be a Thing very unlikely, next to Impossibility; yet a pitiful shift being better than none, this comes in with the rest, and helps to rock the Soul into a pleasing Slumber. It seems their Brains are strong enough to contrive how to promote their own Fall, but will not serve them to ponder how to keep themselves from Ruine.

One would think they could not be worse mad than they are already, and therefore they might venture upon a serious Consideration of their ways without danger. Take a view of thy Actions, Sinner: Go into Houses where Mad-men are kept, and see whether thy Deportment and Practice be not as like theirs, as one thing can be like another: 'Tis the Character of Mad-men, to chuse Means altogether unsuitable to the End they design; if they offer to kindle a Fire with shining Brass, or attempt to build a House without Materials, or think that a Net will secure them against the bitterest Frost, or hope to be Masters of a Trade without learning of it, or talk of being acquainted with such a Language, when they have neither Books nor Men to converse withal; We justly look upon them as distracted: And would not one think thee besides thy Wits, that hears thee hope for Heaven, without taking the Way that leads to it?

And

And talk of being fav'd, when thy Actions favour only of Preparation for eternal Misery? To hope to be saved by following the Dictates of the Flesh, is as wise an Act, as to hope to be warm by sitting upon Ice, or by surrounding thy self with Snow-balls. Thou wouldst take that Man to be beside himself, that should chuse to lie all Night in Mire and Dirt, when there is a convenient Bed prepared for him; or that should prefer sleeping on a Dunghill, before reposing himself upon a clean Couch: And dost not thou act the same madness, when thou preferrest lying in the Arms of an Enemy, before resting in the Bosom of a gracious Redeemer? And hadst rather rest in sin, more odious and loathsome to God than any Dunghill, than delight thy self in him whose Service is perfect Freedom?

Can there be a greater madness than to prefer a Stone before Bread, and a Serpent before a Fish? And is not thy Distraction as great, to esteem a sinful Pleasure more than the Favour of God? and set by the Dross and Dung of this World, more than the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ? No Man commends *Midias* for his Wisdom, when he desired, That all things he touch'd might turn into Gold; for hereby his very Victuals suffered Transmutation, and he was starv'd; And art not thou as foolish when thou desirest nothing but worldly ease and pleasures? When those Things thou dost so earnestly wish for, will be thy undoing, and those very Delicates thou longest for, will at last famish thy Soul for ever?

Who

Who takes not the *Corinthians* for distracted Men, when they abused the Ambassadors of a powerful Republick, which could crush them into Ruin? And art not thou as much beside thy self when thou dost vilifie and slight the Message of the King of Heaven, and not only stoppest thine Ears against the Offers of Mercy, but puttest ill Constructions on the Endeavours of God to convert thee, as if he intended to rob thee of thy Happiness, when nothing but that Endeavour can procure it? Is this thy Wisdom, to neglect the weightiest Concerns, and spend thy Time in admiring Bubbles? Is this thy Wisdom, with *Reboboam*, to despise the Counsel of the Grave and Ancient, and follow the Advice of young Men; to neglect what the Ancient of Days proclaims in thine Ears, and to hearken what a few rash Youths do suggest? To slight what the most prudent Men assure thee upon Experience to be so, and to tread in those Paths which thy greatest Enemies entice thee to walk in? Is this thy Wisdom, to prefer a few drops before an immense Ocean of Blessedness; an Atom before an Infinite; and the smallest dust upon the Ballance before mount *Zion*, which can never be moved? Is this Wisdom, to thrust away Salvation with both Arms, and to oppose the Endeavours of that God, that even compels thee to come to the Supper of the Lamb? Is this thy Wisdom, to lie in a Dungeon, when a Palace is prepared for thy Reception? And to be enamoured with Deformity itself, when thou art courted by him who is altogether Lovely? Is this thy Wisdom, to rely on broken Reeds,

rather than on the Rock of Ages? And to trust more to Castles in the Air, than to him who is the Ancient of Days, and hath promised neither to leave nor to forsake those that call upon him faithfully?

And when the Case stands thus with thee, when thou art as mad as thou well canst be, sure thou needest not be afraid that Consideration of thy Ways will make thee so. Consideration! Why this will make thee sober; this would bring thee to thy right Senses again; this would make thee live like a rational man again; this would restore thee to thy Wits again; this would cure the Distempers of thy Brain; this would be so far from promoting, that it would chase away all madness and distraction; this would clear thy Understanding, and rectify thy Will and Affections, and make all thy Faculties move more orderly.

Consideration would let thee see what Madness it is to despise him whom thou standest most in need of; and to neglect that now, which, upon thy Death-bed, thou wilt wish thou hadst minded day and night. This would represent to thy mind, what Weakness of Judgment it is to call thy self happy, with *Craesus*, before thy end; and to flatter thy self with Felicity, before thou knowest whether the latter part of thy Life will be agreeable to the former, or to the present in Affluence and Prosperity. This would shew thee what a Folly it is to slight the *Fountain of living Waters*, and to hunt after *broken Cisterns which can hold no Water*; and to esteem a *Wilderness, a land of deserts, and of pits; a land of drought, and of the shadow of Death; a land*
which

which no Man passes through, and where no Man dwells, infinitely more than a plentiful Country, Jer. 2. 6. This would shew thee what a Folly it is to forfeit the Favour of him that must be thy Judge one Day; and to make him thy Foe, without whose Mercy thou must fall a Prey to hellish Furies; To scorn that Provision now, the Crumbs whereof thou wilt be glad to gather one Day; and to mock his kindness now, when one day thou wouldst rejoice at the least Smile of his Countenance, if thou couldst but have it. This would shew thee, what a Folly it is, to be ravished more with a painted Coronet, than with the real Glories of a Kingdom; and to rejoice more in the present Pomp and Adoration of a Stage, than in thy Right to the Reversion of a Crown; and what distraction it is to think that the Great God, who changes not, will make those Blessed, who renounce his Bliss, and quench Hell-fire for Men, because they are resolved to run into it; to make those like unto the Angels of God, that will live like Beasts here; and prefer those to his Throne, that would not have him to Reign over them! This would shew thee what a Folly it is to make merry at the Brow of a Pit; and to sing Care away, when thy Sins call for Mourning and Lamentation.

Consideration, Sinner, would let thee see, That there is no Wisdom like that Wisdom, which makes Men wise unto Salvation; which makes them deliberately take God for their Guide and Portion, and search into those Things which do most nearly concern them; which makes them attentive to God's providences, and considerate

in examining the Reasons, and End of his Love to Mankind; which makes them chuse the Good and refuse the Evil; and teaches them how to prefer the Suggestions of the Spirit before those of Flesh and Blood; which teaches them to apply Things to their own Souls, and to reduce general Precepts to particular Persons, Times, Places, and to digest them into spiritual Profit and Emolument; and that those, *who deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, living soberly, righteously and godly in this present World, looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus*, are the only Men that are in their Wits; and that the rest who forget their Calling, and *walk not worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are called*, do really unman themselves, and live below their Reason. This would let thee see, that those who give *all diligence to add to their Faith, Virtue; and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly-kindness; and to Brotherly-kindness, Charity; and are not barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*, are the Men that chuse the fittest Means for the greatest End; and that he that works to Day in God's Vineyard, and so numbers his Days, that he may apply his Heart unto Wisdom; and lives like a Person that remembers he hath a Soul to be sav'd, is the Man who governs his Affairs with Discretion. This would let thee see, that Men do pretend to Learning in vain, while they are ignorant of Mortification of their Members which are upon the Earth, and
of

of a ſpiritual Life, which is every Man's greateſt Intereſt. That the *Painter* doth but draw the Picture of his own Ruin, who is not wiſe for Eternity, or doth not repreſent to his Mind the Images of that Glory which ſhall e'er long be revealed in holy Men, ſo as to lead a Life which may be a Preparative to it. That the *Diſputant* is no better than a Heretick in Manners, who doth not reaſon himſelf out of the Snares of Sin, and ſhew forth, out of a good Converſation, his Works with Meekneſs. That the *Logician*, who reſolves all *knotty Arguments*, is but a Fool, while he knows not how to keep himſelf from the Wiles of the Devil; and that the *Grammarians*, who rectifies the Errors of Speech, is but a Mad-man, while he takes no care to rectifie the Errors of his Life. That the *Aſtronomer*, who tells the ſtars, and calls them by their Names, is vain in his Imaginations, while he hath not his Converſation in Heaven. That the *Metaphyſician*, that ſpeculates Things above Senſe and Nature, is but a very indiſcreet Perſon, while he takes no Heed to make God his higheſt Comfort and Delight. That all *Opticks* are Nonſenſe, which do not teach Men to behold the Mighty God that made them; and all *Geometry* but Confuſion, which leaves Men ignorant of the Height and Depth of the Love of God.

Conſideration would diſcover to thee, That God who is moſt Wiſe, is moſt Holy too; and that in vain we imitate him in one Attribute, except we imitate him in another; and how irrational a Thing ſin is; what ſtrange unmanly Actions it puts Men upon; Actions which they muſt be

ashamed of, if ever they are saved; and must renounce and detest, when they have done them, if ever they arrive to inward Peace and Satisfaction. This would set before thee the *Euge's*, the Applause, the Honour God bestows on those who are so wise as to take their Leave of Sin, before Sin leaves them, and exercise themselves unto Godliness, that they may attain unto eternal Life.

But what will not Prejudice do? It was that which made the *Jews* call Christ a *Samaritan*, a Devil, a Wine-bibber, a Friend to Publicans and Sinners. It was that made them hale the Apostles to their Governors, and cry out, *Away with them, it is not fit they should live upon Earth*. It was this made *Ahab* hate the upright *Micaiah*, and the *Athenian* condemn the just *Aristides*, tho' he had never seen him. It was this made the poor Man, who knew not what *John Huss's* Doctrine was, so busie and industrious to carry Wood for his Funeral Pile, and as zealous to kindle it; insomuch that the Martyr could not but cry out, O Holy Simplicity! 'Tis this sets Men against Consideration of their Ways, and makes them give out, That it will crack their Brains, and disorder their Understandings. Indeed it will cause a Tumult in the Soul, a conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh, between Christ and *Belial*, but such a strife, as will end in a Glorious Calm. When Consideration enters, Madness vanishes; as wild Beasts do creep into their Dens at the Approach of Day-light. The World may make Men go besides themselves. Consideration reduces the whole Man

to sobriety. Consideration indeed may put Men upon Actions, which, in the World's apprehension, may be Madness; Thus it made St. *Anthony* part with all his Substance to the Poor, that he might have Treasure in Heaven; and made others live upon Herbs and Bread and Water only, that thereby they might subdue their Lusts the better; but of this, none can judge so well, as he that is the Fountain of Wisdom, even that God, who is Wisdom itself; and if he set the Mark of Wisdom on them, the Verdict of the World is to be regarded no more, than the Judgment a blind Man gives of Colours. I know he that will deny himself in sensual Pleasures, and trembles at a Sin, which others laugh at, and is afraid of offending God even in smaller Matters, and prays with all Prayer and Supplication, watching thereunto with all perseverance, passes for a Mad-man with Men whose Consciences are defiled; but such Mens Tongues are no slanders: And Consideration would shew, That nothing is more agreeable to the Rules of Wisdom and Prudence, than to live in conformity to the Will and Pleasure of him, who is the great Sovereign of the World, and hath given us Souls capable of being govern'd by Moral Laws and Precepts, and is resolved to scourge him with Scorpions, that knows his Master's Will, and doth it not.

It was sin made the Prodigal distracted, it was this puffed him up, and tempted him to say with *Pharaoh*, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice?* It was this made him ill-natur'd, and turbulent, discomposed his Understanding, and

robb'd him of the Notions which Nature and good Education had planted in him; and in this he discover'd his Folly, that he left his Father's House, travell'd into a far Country, as far from Heaven and Holiness as he could, and there wasted his Substance with riotous Living; whence it came to pass, that a Famine arising in the Land, he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks the Swine did eat, and no Man would vouchsafe them to him: Consideration brought him to himself, and to his Happiness again; and his pondering, *How many Servants of my Father have Bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with Hunger? I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son: Make me as one of thy hired Servants,* Luke 15. 17, 18, 19. This, I say, brought his Reason into Order again, and consequently prepared for his Quiet and Happiness. And indeed, the Confession of Men who put off the Old, and put on the New Man created after God in Righteousness and true Holiness, shews what we are to think of Consideration. When they come in good earnest to reflect on their former sinful Life, they are ready to call themselves a Thousand Fools, and Beasts, and Sots, and wonder how it was possible for them to live so long directly contrary to Reason, and to all the Principles of Gratitude and Humility. Consideration sets all to Rights again; and they would not for any thing, but that they had ruminated on their Folly, and compared it with the Interest of their

their Souls, and the Will of God, in order to a just aggravation of their Madneſs: For *now* they are ſenſible, that *before* they underſtood nothing to any purpoſe, and acted but like Changelings, contrary to all the Dictates of the Law of Nature, and their own Conſciences. Thus Conſideration, as *Ananias* did to *Saul*, comes in, and immediately *there fall from the Sinners Eyes, as it were Scales, and he receives Sight forthwith, and ariſes, and is ſtrengthned*, Acts 19. 9. and Wiſdom enters into his Heart, ſuch Wiſdom as before he was a ſtranger to: *The Merchandiſe of it is better than the Merchandiſe of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold: She is more precious than Rubies; and all the Things thou canſt deſire, are not to be compared unto her. She is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retains her*, Prov. 3. 14, 15, 18.

Conſideration enlightens him, and makes him wiſer than *Socrates*, more learned than the *Druids*, more ſagacious than the *Brachmans*, more quick than the *Gymnoſophiſts*, more apprehenſive than the *Persian Magi*: *Epicurus*, tho' called The Sun of the World; *Anaxagorus*, tho' ſtiled The Mind of Mankind; *Ariſtotle*, tho' firnamed The Sea of Wiſdom, the Miracle of Learning, and the laſt Attempt of Nature; yet are nothing compared with a Man whom Conſideration hath reduced to that *Wiſdom which is from above, firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, eaſie to be intreated, without Partiality, and without Hypocriſie, full of good Works*.

VIII. *Impediment.*

VIII. *An Opinion, that Conversion, or turning to God as Divines do represent it, is not necessary to Salvation.* We may charitably believe, That most Men who are averse from Consideration, come to Sermons; and we may suppose, that, as careless as they are in hearing the Word of the Living God, sometimes before they are aware something strikes their Hearts, and sticks with them; which, when they are any way sober, or free from Business, will goad and sting them into Consideration of their Ways; and not seldom, with *Agrippa*, they are almost perswaded to take their sinful Lives into serious Consideration, and feel good Purposes, and Wishes, and Intentions, and Desires in their Souls, to set Time apart for pondering how they may be converted, and dedicate themselves sincerely to God's Service, in order to their everlasting Bliss. But in such cases, either the Devil, or their corrupt Hearts are ready to whisper in their ears, that Conversion is not so operose, so laborious, so dreadful a Thing, as is described in publick Discourses; and that the Men that preach, stretch it farther than needs; and consequently, Consideration how to get into the State that's recommended to them, is altogether needless; for if that strictness and close walking with God be not necessary, why should any Man break his Brains with Consideration how to attain to that humble, self-denying circumspect Life, as is said to be the essential Ingredient of Conversion.

I know not how Conversion can be made more necessary, than Christ hath made it. If daily Bread be necessary, if Meat and Drink be necessary, if Raiment be necessary, if Health and Strength be necessary, then Conversion is necessary; for it is the Bread which comes down from Heaven, it is the Meat and Drink of our Souls: This must keep them warm, and cover them, and make them Healthy, and Strong, and Vigorous. 'Tis that which Heaven is entail'd on, and without which Men (if they dare take the Word of that *Jesus*, whom they do believe to be the Son of God) can look for nothing else but everlasting Destruction: *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, Matth. 18. 3. are the express Words of him, who came from Heaven to reveal his Father's Will; Words, which would strike like Thunder, pierce like Lightning, frighten like Ghosts, and, like Charms, bind the Soul to her good Behaviour; Words, which do not only import the absolute necessity, but represent the Nature and Manner of true Conversion. And if the Words added, by way of Explication, be thoroughly weighed, it will appear to any rational Man, that *that* laborious Conversion, which the Ministers of the Gospel press and commend, is no other, but what Christ requires in order to Salvation: For what can be the meaning of this Phrase, *becoming as little Children*, but that Men must learn to be *Children in Malice*, I. Cor. 14. 20. pull down their Passions, watch over their inordinate Affections, overcome themselves, and harbour no grudge, no hatred, no revengeful Thoughts

Thoughts in their Hearts, against those that have offended them; and, *like new-born Babes, desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby*, I. Pet. 2. 2. *i. e.* with all humility and alacrity submit themselves to be guided, and ruled, and governed by the Precepts and Injunctions of *Christ* in the Gospel, without disputing or contradicting his Commands, tho' levell'd against Flesh and Blood, as much as Children leave themselves to the guidance and direction of their Nurses; and have neither strength, nor will, nor malice, to oppose the Will or Order of those that lead them: Not that *Christ* forbids examining either the Divinity or Reasonableness of his Doctrine and Injunctions. No: God is not afraid to have his Will tried and examined by right Reason; for as it is the Effect of the highest Reason, so it must needs be most agreeable to Reason, it being impossible that Truth can be inconsistent with Truth. Go, lay together all the Principles which that spark of Divinity, right Reason, doth suggest. Do not consult the Reason of sensual Men, who call Laughter, Reason, and brutish Delights, Effects of a Human Understanding; so Devils may call the Fire they roll in, the Light of God's Countenance: But summon together all the Principles which the wisest Men in all Ages have unanimously agreed on, and let God's Will be tried by that Touchstone, and its Glory will soon appear; its Characters, like the Stones of the High-Priest's *Ephod*, will glitter and sparkle to admiration: And therefore *Christ* doth so little discourage Men from trying the Divinity of his

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Sayings and Commands, by the Rule of Right Reason, that in several Places he bids the *Pharisees*, and whoever were his Adversaries, to judge impartially of the Arguments he gave for the Divine Original of his Doctrine. And without all peradventure, this Liberty every Man hath to examine, and satisfy himself, whether the Injunctions of *Christ* and his Apostles, were Things that dropt from Heaven, or no. But then, when Men are convinced, or have sufficient Reason to be convinced, That these Precepts are the peremptory Will of God concerning their Salvation; (as any Person who is not a Changing, or a meer Natural, may find upon due Examination and Enquiry, if he will;) there God expects most justly, that all Pretences and Excuses and carnal Reasonings should fall, and the Soul submit readily to the Yoke of *Christ*, and resign its Will to *Christ's* Will, (though it cannot for the present comprehend the true Reason of some Commands) and suffer itself to be acted and guided by these Laws, without Contradiction, or Opposition, or Tergiversation, denying and renouncing every Apprehension or Suggestion that would solicit or tempt it to start aside from sincere Obedience, and all Discourses that would dash or impede its Willingness and Readiness to embrace them.

And indeed, this is all we mean by true Conversion, *viz.* ceasing to obey the Dictates of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and endeavouring seriously to live up to the Precepts of the Gospel, without asking our Lusts, or vain Desires,

fires, whether they are willing to it or no; a sincere Resolution to get from under the Yoke of Sin, and to make the Lord Jesus, who bought us with his own Blood, our supream Ruler and Governor. And since there can be no Government without Laws, and we never heard of any other Laws Christ gave, but what we have in the Gospel, we cannot and dare not but conclude, that to live up to these Laws of the Gospel, is true Conversion. And therefore, an unconverted Sinner is called, *A Man without Law*; not but that he hath a Law in his Members warring continually against the Law of his Mind; nor that he lives under no Law of the Civil Magistrate: He can live in no Society, but he must be subject to the Municipal Law of the Land; But because he doth not make the Law of Christ the Rule of his Thoughts, and Words, and Actions, which upon his Conversion he begins to do, and becomes a Man that lives by Rule, and is as cautious of doing any Thing against that Law, tho' in secret, and removed from the sight and presence of Men, as if the greatest and gravest Assembly did surround him.

And indeed, the Primitive Christians took no Person to be converted, that did not make these Laws the great Rule of his Life, and shewed by his Actions, That he prized and esteemed and valued these Laws, above all the Orders and Decrees and Constitutions of the greatest Monarchs. Not that they disobeyed the Laws of their Prince, where they clashed not with any Law of God: No, this they scorn'd and abhorred; nay, they

they gloried in their Submission to all the lawful Commands of their Superiours. But when the Laws of their Princes interfered with any Law of Christ, there they shew'd, by their chearful Sufferings, that they had a greater Master to serve, and that there was no greater King than Conscience.

When we do intreat and admonish Men to be converted, what do we do but perswade them to mortifie their Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs, which is Idolatry; and to put off Anger, Wrath, Malice, Blaſphemy, and filthy Communication out of their Mouths; and to put on Bowels of Mercy, Kindneſs, humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, ſo as to forbear one another, and forgive one another. To let the Word of Chriſt dwell in them richly, in all Wiſdom, teaching and admoniſhing one another in Pſalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, ſinging with Grace in their Hearts unto the Lord; and whatever they do in Word or Deed, do it all in the Name of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, giving Thanks unto God and the Father through him. To be poor in Spirit, to be meek, to hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, to purifie their Hearts, to follow Peace with all Men as much as in them lies. To be patient under Slanders, Reproaches, and Perſecutions. To live in a ſenſe of future Joys, and of an everlaſting Recompence. To avoid all apparent Occaſions of Evil, even Things that are harmleſs in themſelves, if they provoke or tempt to Sin. To avoid Swearing

in their ordinary Discourses and Communications; to love their Enemies; to do Good to them that hate them; to pray for them which persecute them, and despitefully use them. To give Alms without any sinister Ends; to pray without affection of vain Applause, or laying any stress upon the Length of their Prayers. To Fast without Ostentation; to lay up their Treasure in Heaven; to trust God's Providence in their respective Callings and Conditions; to love him better than the World; to use the World as if they us'd it not. Not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the Day of Redemption; not to judge rashly, but to forsake their greater Sins, before they find Fault with the lesser Transgressions of their Neighbours; not to be cold and indifferent in Matters of Piety; not to be peevish, or froward, or impatient, to hearken to the Reproofs and Exhortation of faithful Monitors; not to be pleased with their own Praises, nor to comply with sinful Men in their vicious Inclinations; not to listen to the Dictates of Flesh and Blood, to the Censures, Backbitings, Reproaches, Aspersions, which prophane Men cast upon the Ways of Holiness; to be bold as Lions, in maintaining the Honour of Religion, and in daring to be good in a sinful Generation; to walk in the strait Way, and take Pains for Heaven. To avoid Hypocrisy, and to manifest their Profession by their Lives; both to hear, and to do what they hear, and to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance; and to let their Light so shine before Men, that they may see their good Works,

Works, and glorifie their Father which is in Heaven. To be faithful unto Death, and to hold out to the End; and to suffer for the Testimony of *Jesus*, if God thinks fit to call them to it; and to consider him that endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest they be weary and faint in their Minds; to feed the Hungry, to cloath the Naked, and visit the Sick, and to hope and to believe that they shall be rewarded at the Resurrection of the Just.

These are the great Lessons we beg of Men that they would hearken to; Lessons which would refine their Souls, clarify their Reason, make them fit for conversing with him that dwelleth in the Heavens.

These are the Things we would have them labour after, when we entreat them to turn, or to be converted unto God: And what are all these Performances, but Duties enjoined by our Lord and Master upon pain of Damnation? He hath protested, That those who wilfully neglect these Laws, and do not think themselves obliged to obey them, when yet they profess themselves to be his Disciples, shall find by woeful Experience what it is to tread under foot the Son of God, and to turn away from him that speaks from Heaven. He is unchangeably resolved, where Men make light of his Invitation, and slight these reasonable Terms of Salvation, and entertain his Message with Contempt, and neither repent of that Contempt, nor testify their Repentance by Tears, and Sorrow, and Reformation, and Obedience, for the Future, to let them

them have that eternal Misery, that unquenchable Fire, whereby he thought to fright and wean them from their Lusts, and to drive them into Paradise, and which is so far from terrifying of them, that they run into it most greedily, seem to invade those Flames, and to be in love with endless Agonies.

And now let any Man in his Wits judge, whether Conversion in that sense we speak of, both in publick and private, be not indispensibly necessary? And whether Consideration how to be converted, fall not under the same necessity? Our Natures are not so very prone to Goodness, that we may yield to these Laws, without examining and thinking what we ought to take, to work our Hearts into holy Willingness to submit; for 'tis a swimming against the Stream, climbing up a Hill, running counter to our Inclinations: And therefore the Soul had need be seasoned with Thoughts of the admirable Contrivance, Goodness, Profit, Benefit, and Advantages of these Laws, and of the Love and Compassion of God that shines in them; and of the Harmony, Order, Calmness, Peace and Satisfaction Obedience causes, before we can conform our Will to his Will, who is resolved, that *Dogs* and *Swine* shall not enter into Heaven. Indeed, a Man that will obey, and be saved, must be a thinking Man, his Mind must set sail, and launch out into the deep; fetch the ancient *Hermits* from *Ægypt*, *Saints* from *Jerusalem*, *Parthians* and *Medes*, and *Elamites*, and what holy Men lived formerly in *Pontus* and *Asia*, *Phrygia* and *Pamphylia*, and bring them into his own Closet, set them before
his

his Thoughts, behold how they kept under their Bodies, and brought them in subjection, lest they should miss of a Recompence in the Resurrection of the Just.

But what shall we say? When Men are resolved to live like Swine, and will not believe that God demands that Holiness of them, the Scripture speaks of; when they believe God to be altogether such an one as they themselves, a friend to Sin, and false in his threatnings; when they believe, That discourses of Divines about *Conversion* are no more but Talk, and a Cast of their Office, and that themselves give no Credit to the Things they preach to others; when they believe, That God denies them nothing that their Nature prompts them to, and is pleased with their Frolicks, and Divertisements. When they believe, That the great end of their Creation is to get Money; and that they have a Being given them in this World, to fill their Bellies with all the Dainties they can get; when they do not heartily believe a Judgment to come, and look upon the Flames of *Tophet* but as painted Fire; when they take worldly Felicity for their Heaven, and wish there were no other Beatitude after this Life, but *Mahomet's* Paradise. When they account that to be the best Calling, and Condition, and Place for them to live in, where they have but fulness of Bread, and Money enough, and Instruments of ease; as Coaches, and Chairs, and Horses, and Servants to attend them: When they do so, we had as good tempt them to knock their heads against a Wall, as persuade them into a
 O seri-

terious Consideration of their Ways. Without all peradventure, 'tis worth considering, That God intends something by the aforeſaid Precepts, and that they are not deſigned for Beaſts, and irrational Creatures; That God doth not think ſo light of them as we do; and hath a Senſe of Honour, and will not let a wilful Contempt of Things ſo ſacred, and ſo venerable, go unpuniſhed; that Obedience makes Men like unto God, and cauſes them, in ſome meaſure to approach the Holineſs of his Nature; That thoſe certainly muſt be in a better Condition, when they come to die, who follow theſe Rules, than the other, that know no Laws, but the Dictates of their own Licentiousneſs; That theſe Laws enjoin nothing but what agrees with and promotes the Proſperity of Mankind; and that if we believe God to be jealous of his Glory, to obey theſe Laws, muſt, in all probability, be the moſt likely Way to pleaſe him; That theſe Precepts do ſignally advance the Dignity of Human Nature; and cloſing with them, ſhews the generoſity and greatneſs of Man's Soul, that he dares live above the common level of Mankind; that to become ſubject to theſe Laws, is the ſafeſt Courſe; and a Man can loſe nothing conſiderable by that ſubjection, if there were no other World; that all thoſe that ſubmit to theſe Laws, cannot be Fools; and if the wiſeſt of Men cloſe with theſe Injunctions, it muſt, to ſpeak moderately, be very great Imprudence to laugh at them.

But where Conversion is thought a Thing ſuperfluous, no marvel if Conſideration be look'd upon

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upon as a Task fit only for Men who have nothing else to employ their Time in. And yet in their temporal Concerns superfluous Things are most coveted; Rooms of State they seldom make use of, more Provision than they can well spend, more Furniture than they need, more Garments than they have just Occasion for: So that superfluous Things are not always cast aside, and therefore Conversion might, at least, be as much minded, as those Superfluities of Vanity. But the same Reason that serves them in Temporal, doth not serve them in Spiritual Things; and they will count that a good Argument in Matters relating to their Bodies, which they will by no Means admit of in a point relating to their Soul, though the case and circumstances be the same. And as it is with Men, that will not receive a Present sent them from one they scorn; They do not only refuse the Gift, but will not see the Messenger that brings it: So here, Consideration being the Messenger that would present them with the vast Treasure of Conversion, they do not only reject the Gift, but the Donor too. Indeed, where People despise the House, they'll have no great Value for the Porch; and when the End seems needless, they'll not trouble themselves much about using the Means that lead to it. And such Persons we must leave to be convinced of the Necessity of Conversion, by their Punishment. Since Reason cannot persuade them, Judgment must take away the Veil from their Eyes. What Exhortation cannot effect, Thunder must produce. What they will not

believe upon the Word of God, they must be forced to give assent to by the Flames they shall e'er long feel the rage and fury of; and God, who could not be glorified in their Conversion, must glorifie himself in their everlasting Confusion.

IX. *Impediment.*

IX. *Mistaking the Nature of Consideration.*
As the Way to Life is but one, so the Ways that lead to Destruction are infinite, and without Number. And such Root doth a sinful Life, if not check'd betimes, take in Men, that if they can but find the shadow of an Excuse, they will not fail to lay Hold of it, that they may not part with what they love so dearly. 'Tis from hence, that all their little Attempts to perform their Duties, pass with them for the Duties themselves; as if lifting up, or moving a Piece of Lead, were as much as carrying of it from one place to another. They would be angry with their Servants, if demanded what Work they have done they should reply, That they have executed their Master's Command, when they have only touch'd the Plow with a Finger, or played with it to divert them; and take it very ill of a Waterman, that should ask Money of them for carrying them to the place they intended for, if he should but give a stroke or Two with his Oar, and so give over; and laugh at that Person, that should pretend he hath made them a Fire, when he hath laid but Two or Three sticks together. The Folly
they

they find fault with in others, they practise themselves; and while they pretend to take the Mote out of their Brother's Eye, they are insensible of the Beam that is in their own; for thus we find they do proceed, when exhorted to a serious Consideration of their Ways; they take every sad Thought of their Spiritual Concerns for Consideration, and a rambling Imagination of their Danger, passes for Contemplation of their Spiritual Wretchedness.

Because now and then, when some loss or affliction befalls them, a melancholy conceit steals into their Minds; and when they cannot have their Will, or are crossed, and disappointed in their Worldly Expectations, they begin to fret, and grow Impatient, and in that Impatience give a Look to the Image of *Jesus*, and his Disciples, who endured great Afflictions; because when their Children have dealt unkindly by them, or Poverty is like to come upon them, they vouchsafe to let in a transient Contemplation of the World's Vanity; And when some great Man hath cast them off, or their Friends are displeased with them, they do slightly reflect on the never-failing Compassion of God, and cast a careless Look on their Sins, that may have deserved the Trouble they are under; they give out, they consider the Things that belong unto their Peace; and if those Flashes do not produce the Effects in them the Holy Ghost expects, they are apt to charge Consideration with Unfufficiency; and cry out against it, as a Means improper to produce that Seriousness of Life, which God requires

of them in order to everlasting Happiness; as if, like *Aqua-fortis*, it would take out the Ink which Sin and the Devil hath cast on their Souls in a Moment; and a Raven could be changed into a Swan, with an Almighty *Fiat*, *Let it be so, and it must be so*. Wherein they appear to me like young and hasty Chymists, that are impatient, and will not let the *Menstruum* stand long enough, but would have the Experiment perfect, before the matter be ripe for Operation; and thus they come to miscarry.

To think how Men play the fool with Religion, how aukardly they go about it, and how silly the Apologies are they make for this Neglect, cannot but make a sober Man admire, how it is possible for them to sink into such simplicity, or fondness rather, to delude their own Souls! They know it is not a stroke or Two that will fell a Tree; nor knocking twice, or thrice, that will pull down a House; nor blowing slightly, that will make green Wood burn; and yet that they should be so sottish, so impertinent, so abominably careless in the greatest Concern of their Lives; and fancy, that a few careless Thoughts now and then will produce that circumspect Life God commands and urges; betrays so great a shallowness of Reason, and is an Act so weak, that I know not how to give it a Name disparaging and low enough.

Alas, Consideration, as hath been hinted before, is a frequent, reiterated, lively Representation of the Danger of a sinful Life; and, SINNER, didst not thou go about it like a Man
that

that is in jest, thou wouldst see what Wonders it doth cause. Didst thou set upon this thoughtful Task in sober Sadness; and, if the first, and second, and third Consideration, would not weaken the Fortifications, or strong Holds of Iniquity, assault them with fresh Supplies of Thoughts, and aggravate the Sins thou wouldst be rid of, and think how often slighted Convictions border upon the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and move God to swear in his Wrath, That such Men shall never enter into his Rest; thou wouldst not find that Relish in Sin, which now thou dost; thou wouldst find it hath more of the Gall and Wormwood in it than of the Honey. The sensual Appetite would lose much of its heat and fury, and thy Passions would be brought into a cooler Temper. *Elisba* bid the King of *Israel* *smite upon the Ground, and he smote thrice, and stayed; And the Man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed them,* II. Kings 13. 18, 19. An Emblem of what is to be done in the Case before us. Sin may be weakened by some strokes of Consideration, but will not be consumed without those strokes be often repeated.

One great Error Men lie under, is this, That they consider the Pleasure of Sin, more than the Benefits of a serious Religious Life; and whatever hath most of my Consideration, must necessarily prevail most with me. Let but the Want of God's Love be more thought of, than outward Poverty, and God's Holiness and hatred of Sin

dwell on your Understandings, more than the displeasure and contempt of Men ; let but the Concerns of your Souls have more of your Contemplations than the Satisfaction of the flesh, and you'll see other effects.

But where Men suffer the sensual satisfaction, they have either felt or heard of, to play upon their fancy, and sport itself with their imagination; where they dandle the soft conceit, and call the smiling Pleasure to mind oftner than the real and solid Pleasures of Holiness; There the former cannot but get the better, and play the Sovereign, and rule the Soul, as will appear (to mention no more) from these Two instances; Such a Man is troubled with lascivious Thoughts, and lustful Desires; when the sinful Thought shoots first into the Mind, if he do presently call *in* Considerations of God's Prohibition, and anger, and of everlasting burnings, and set before his Eyes the fate of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, the Brevity and Transitoriness of these fleshly Satisfactions, the Tears, the Anguish, the Grief they must cost him, if ever God should accept of him; the uncertainty of his Life, the hazard he runs of being cut off before he may have a Heart to repent; The Multitude and Variety of Sins his Lusts will engage him in; The Diseases and Infirmities he may procure; The Unquietness of Conscience he shall pull down upon himself, &c. and resolve to enlarge upon these Discouragements, and do it as often as he finds his Flesh grow unruly and troublesome, he'll certainly get the Victory, and captivate his Lusts to the Obedience of Christ Jesus.

But

But when these Considerations are called *in* only for Formality's sake ; and the Sinner, to make God some Recompence for the Folly he delights in, and stop the Mouths of the crying Child, his Conscience, not out of any Love to the Duty, but forced and dragged, as Men go to the Gallows, is content to think a little of his Extravagance, and that which gratifies his sickly passions, is suffered to be the chief Guest of his Understanding ; when instead of Arguments against these Lusts, he lays out for Topicks, and Considerations, which may diminish and take off from the greatness of the Sin ; as that God will not be angry for one Sin, and that, sure, God remembers how frail and weak his Nature is, and that he doth not intend to allow himself long in it, and that he would avoid it, but cannot ; and that the Strength of his Passion will excuse the Heinousness of his Crime, and that most Men have had their Frolicks in their younger Days, &c. where he suffers the Circumstances of his last Nights Reveling to roul in his Mind, how soft such Embraces were, how kind the Person was that loved him, how sweet her Addresses were, how melting her Smiles and Favours, how pleasing what she said and did, how merry the Meeting was, how easie he was under those sensual Raptures, how glad other Persons would be to have such an Opportunity as he had ; How he was heightened by such a Cup, how elevated with that curious Drink, how that Liquor *with the strange Name* disposed him for the Caresses of such a Beauty, how such a One applauded him
for

for his Wit; how Taking that was, how delighted the Company was with his Rallery, &c. Where, I say, the Mind dwells upon such light and frothy Conceptions; and whatever would dash them, is only shewn, as it were, to the Mind, but is not suffered to enter in to take possession; beats only against the Fancy, is not permitted to mingle with it, or if it enter, is quickly thrust out again; and if it be allowed a Seat there, is soon dismissed, and turned away again; there certainly the Man must continue a slave to his Corruptions and passionate Desires; and the Considerations, which were to produce Seriousness and Obedience in him, cannot but be ineffectual, because they do not lie on long enough; as salted Meat will not lose much of its saltish Taste, if but dipt in Water, nor Cloth imbibe a Tincture that is but only sprinkled upon't.

Another receives a signal Injury, the Affront he suffers is great and notorious; on a sudden his Passions are up; his Understanding is fruitful, suggests a thousand Methods to him, how he might right himself. The Devil secretly helps to enlarge the heinousness of the Fact, enriches the Invention, makes it quick, apprehensive, fills him with the unhappy Images of aggravating Circumstances, represents to his Mind the sweetness of Revenge, the dismal Aspect of the Indignity, the unsufferableness of the Disgrace, the ways and means how to compass his vindictive Design, the shame that's thrown upon his Honour, the baseness of the Injury, the sordidness of the Action, the Ingratitude that's
shewn

shewn it; the Incivility the Offender hath discovered; the Verdicts of his acquaintance in case he doth not reward the Offender according to his Work; the blot that will be upon his Family for ever; the various Advantages he formerly had against the Wretch, which yet he scorned to take, &c. And while his mind is filled with these imaginations, 'tis possible Reflections on the Folly of his Anger, and the Charity he owes to all Mankind, the Example of Christ and his Apostles, praying for their persecutors; the Generosity of pardoning an Offence, and forbearing of Revenge, when it lies in our Power to be *even* with the Offender; such Thoughts as these, I say, may strike his Mind; but if he suffer the Motives to Revenge to lodge more quietly in his Mind than the Motives to patience and Forgiveness, it is soon guess'd which of these will be Conquerors. Let but his Mind ruminates and enlarge more upon the great Duty of Forbearing Revenge, than upon the Pleasure of taking Revenge; let him resolve to lay aside the Thoughts of the latter, and only take a View of the former; and when any Motions to reflect on the Injury, and to take it ill, come in, be peremptory that he will think of nothing but the Beauty of Meekness and Patience; and the Thoughts which inflamed his Spirits, and made the Blood boil in his Veins, will cool by Degrees, and the Motions of the flesh will give ground to those of the Spirit.

The same may be said of all other Sins, which he that names the Name of Christ is obliged to depart from; he that would be rid of them, must
not

not let the transitory Satisfaction those Sins afford, hover in his Mind, more than the great worth of an immortal Soul ; where the latter is made the most frequent Object of our Thoughts, Love to the other will dindle away, and at last expire. For our Love changes, and moves from one Thing to another as the Charms of the new Objects are more frequently represented to our Minds, and the attractives of the one are more thought on than the other. It is so in the very Ways of Sin. The lustful Sot leaves the Beauty he doted on just now, and is transported with another. What's the Reason? The new Object rolls in his Mind and Fancy more than the other, and consequently captivates his Affections more ; so that were the loveliness, that is in Goodness, set before the Eye of Reason, more than the Gaudes of Sin ; Goodness, by the Grace of God, would at last preponderate, and carry away the Victory.

To make this appear, we need no other Proof but common Experience ; and tho' after a Man hath ruminated on the Odiousness of a darling bosom Sin, he may fall into it again ; yet the Arguments which make against it, and prompt him to part with it, being called *in* again and again, and laid on afresh ; and as they wear out, or decay, renewed and strengthened with greater inforcives, it will be found, That he who sinned with Courage and Confidence before, begins now to sin with trembling, and reluctancy of Mind, and at last is moved to bid an Eternal Farewel to it. The frequent thinking on these Reasons, the renewed and reiterated Contem-

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plations of the horrid ingratitude against God, and of the shame and sorrow the sin must end in, first weaken and loosen the poisonous Plant, then bruise it, and at last do quite root it up and destroy it: Which is the Reason why the Almighty calls to Men, *Iſa.* 46. 8. *Remember this, and shew your selves Men; bring it again to your mind, O ye Transgressors:* To shew, that without often repeated Consideration, they will continue settled upon their Lees; and that, without it, they act not like rational Men, but like Children rather, whose slight and thin Remembrances of their Errors make them fall into them again, with the next Opportunity.

X. *Impediment.*

X. *Converse with evil Company.* There is not certainly a greater encouragement to real Holiness, than Religious Society, and good Examples. That Innocence we *ſee*, makes deeper impressions on our Hearts, than that we *hear* of, and our Eyes afford greater Motives to imitation than our Ears. A Religious Friend charms me into that Piety he embraces, and his Kindness instills his Devotion into my Soul. I am apt to imbibe his Principles of Virtue, with his kind expressions; and frequent converse makes his goodness as familiar to me, as his Person. The severest mortifications, if I see them performed by those I love, lose much of their rigour and dismal aspect, and become amiable; and as unpleasing a thing as Self-denial is, it looks more easie and facile, when he, I am intimately acquainted

quainted withal, shews me that it is practicable, it doth not appear such a formidable Thing, as before it did. He attempts to dash the Thoughts of impossibility; and when a Thing comes once within the Compass of possibility, there is that natural, or acquired Generosity in some People, as to scorn to leave that undone, which other Persons are to do; and the Result of seeing their Endeavours is commonly this Question, If such a Man can do so, Why cannot I?

There is no sense works upon the Affections like that of Sight; it makes the Object live in the Understanding, and from thence the Will and Affections are solicited into Embraces of it. This was the Reason why the Christians of old, when they would in sober sadness apply themselves to a truly Christian Life, retired into Deserts, where some devout Hermits had their Cells, that by looking on their exemplary Devotion, they might be tempted into a cheerful Imitation of their Goodness.

And as it is with Religious Society, it both makes the Task of the greater and weightier Matters of the Law less difficult, and kindles Desires in our Breasts, to follow so excellent a Pattern; so evil Company on the other Side, doth as much discourage Men from Performances, as are somewhat troublesome to Flesh and Blood; and hereof, Consideration of their Ways is not the least. This implies some Self-denial, and the Sound of the Word imports making War with the soft and sickly Desires of the Flesh; and having wrought their own
Hearts

Hearts into a Detestation of this Duty, they fright others from it; as from *Medusa's* Head, which will certainly turn them into Stones, or insensible Creatures: They care not for sincere Devotion themselves, and would not have others live stricter and preciser than their Neighbours: For, to see others live better, is to receive a Check; and the Goodness of such Persons is a secret Reproof of their own Carelessness. Converse becomes uneasy, where the other Party is Religious, and nothing is so great a Restraint upon their Inclination, as the Conscienciousness of a Companion that gives a *Reprimand* to their Humour; and, as Mustard laid on the Nurse's Nipples mars the Child's Greediness after her Milk, so the modest and serious Behaviour of those they are to converse with, embitters that Mirth they would gladly take their fill of; and therefore as they have a low Esteem of the Ways of God, so they would not have others prize them at a higher Rate. They delight in sensual Satisfaction, and look upon other Mens Discourses concerning Spiritual Delight, as Nonsense. They are averse from subjecting themselves to the Will of God, and would have others as disobedient as themselves. They think it was a far better World when there was not so much Praying and Preaching as there is now; and would have others slight Christ's Invitation to the Supper of the Lamb, as much as themselves.

He that makes such his Familiars, and looks upon them as discreet and rational Men, must
necessa-

necessarily continue a stranger to Consideration of his spiritual and everlasting Concerns; for, as they are no Admirers of Discourses which may advance the Welfare of a Soul, and seldom take the name of God in their Mouths, except it be in their Oaths and Curses; so to be sure, they'll tell very dismal and doleful Stories of Religion upon all Occasions, and represent the severe performances of Piety in such an antick Dress, that he, who prizes their Company, or Acquaintance, shall applaud their Invention, and admire them for their witty Conceits, and despise all serious Thoughts concerning Things of everlasting Consequence. For the Humour is catching, and Things set off with a Jest, first tickle, and then make Profelytes; and he that at first assisted only in the Laughter, comes at last to imitate, and he that bore a part in the smile and applause, is brought so far, as to transcribe the Temper and Inclination.

The Age we live in hath taught the World to vend Prophaneness under the name of Wit, and to contemn Religion under the Mantle of Repartee, and quickness of Fancy; and he that loves to be with these *beaux Esprits*, will, in all probability, learn to be as careless, and as secure as they. Evil Company, where a Man delights in it, will infect him, do what he can; if he have any Good in him, they'll waste and consume it; if he be destitute of virtuous Principles, they'll keep out all Considerations, as shall either discompose him in his Folly, or shed Resolutions into his Soul, to come away, and seek a better Kingdom; insomuch that it may truly be said
of

of such a Man, as of him in the Gospel, who travelled from *Jerusalem to Jericho*, *That he is fallen among Robbers, who strip him of all, and leave him miserable*, Luke 10. 30.

Evil Companions are the Devil's Agents, whom he sends abroad into the World to debauch Virtue, and to advance his Kingdom; and by these Embassadors, he effects more than he could do in his own Person. His own shape and appearing would fright rather than allure, and as well as Men like Sin, did they see the Father of it, they would not be very fond of being his Children. But acting in the Children of Disobedience, which are of the same Flesh and Blood with us, and Creatures of the same shape, and for which we have no Aversion, but rather sometimes a great Affection to, the Bait is easily swallowed: These are his Factors, and by these he draws Men into Eternal darkness. By these he pecks up all the good Seed that's sown in us, and infuses bad qualities into our better part. These laugh Men into Destruction, and damn them in kindness. These fawn Men into Misery, and tickle them into an Eternity of Torments. These turn Religion into Jest, and make the Precepts of the Gospel matter of Railery. These are true Devils, that delight in the Murther of Souls, and sinking into the bottomless Pit, pull down their Adherents with them.

And what Likelihood is there, That a man should consider the Interest of his Soul, that consorts with Persons, who do, as much as lies in them, deprecate the value of it, and strive to put all serious Contemplations out of his Head?

What probability, that a Man should sit down, and set before him the Terror of the Lord, and be transformed by the renewing of his Mind, who, when the Holy Ghost exhorts him to *prove what is the holy, acceptable, and perfect Will of God; to be fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord; to rejoyce in hope, to be patient in tribulation, to continue instant in prayer, to bless them which persecute him*, Rom. 12. 2, 11. gets presently after into Company, where all those Lessons are derided, where the contrary Vices are commended, where Consideration how to be master of these Graces is exploded, as a Thing only fit for Almsmen, and Hospital-Boys; where these serious Exhortations are drowned in Laughter, and such Things suggested as render a Man wise only for the World, and for the Flesh, and make him sagacious how to gratifie his Head-strong Passions and inordinate Affections.

He that considers his Ways, and yet frequents such Society, imitates a foolish Gard'ner, that after he hath sown his Seed, and sees it come up, lets in Hogs to devour and tear it up, and with *Penelope*, undoes that at Night, which he hath woven in the day-time; or like some foolish shepherd, having for some hours watch'd his sheep, leaves them at last exposed to the fury of the Wolf, or some such noxious Animal. Consideration (as I shall prove in the Sequel) requires Separation; and when God calls, *Come out of Babylon, O my People*; it is not only that they may not participate of their Punishment, but that they may not share in their Sins, and consequently, that they may be at leisure to consider how to prevent, and avoid both.

I do not deny, but Men may deal and traffick with Men of a loose Conversation, and not lose their seriousness, nor be discouraged from a holy Preparation for a better Life; so *St. Paul* may converse with *Nero*, and *St. John* with *Herod*; *Daniel* with *Nebuchadnezzar*, and *David* with King *Achish*. So the first Christians had Commerce with the worst of Heathens; and he that lives in the World, or hath any considerable Concerns in it, is forced to keep some Correspondence with Men of ill Principles, and worse Practices. But there is a great Difference between travelling thro' *Ethiopia*, and dwelling there; the former may not change the Complexion, but the latter will infallibly do it. *I wrote to you in an Epistle, not to company with Fornicators, yet not altogether with the Fornicators of this World, or with the Covetous, or Extortioners, or with Idolaters; for then you must needs go out of the World: But now I have written to you not to keep company, if any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such an one not to eat,* saith the Apostle, *I. Cor. 5. 9, 10, 11.* It is one thing to converse with a Man as with a stranger, another to converse with him as a Brother; one thing to pay the duty of Civility to him, another to admit him into the number of my Friends; one thing to be necessitated to discourse with him, another to delight in it; one thing to go into such Company with cautiousness and circumspection, another to rush into it without fear or wit; the former doth not import a Necessity of Pollution, the other makes the Infection inevitable.

Society in sin strangely takes off from the heinousness of it; it makes the Sin appear with a fainter red; it doth not look so dreadful, when Men have Companions in their Offences; they think there is some comfort in having associates in Misery, and dare to sin more freely, when they are not alone in their Transgression. They are afraid their single Valour will never be able to duel God's Wrath and Indignation, but having others join'd with them, they may make a shift to weather out the Tempest of his Anger. They hope God will not damn a Multitude of poor Creatures together, and fancy the great Number of sinners may fright or move the Almighty into Compassion; if they suffer, they think they shall not fare worse than their Neighbours; and if they smart for their Rebellion, they shall be able to bear it as well as their Confederates in the Iniquity. With such airy Notions Men feed themselves; and tho' these are very dangerous Pillows, whereon Men sleeping catch their Death, yet because they are soft and promise present Rest, they are made use of; and whatever is said to the contrary, is look'd upon as the Pharisees Boulders, filled with Nails and Straw, and such harder Materials unfit for repose, and inept for cordial Embraces.

Ill Example draws out the inward Corruption into Action, and the inbred evil Concupiscence, may be, would lie quiet, or die, if such Patterns did not put it into Fermentation. Many Children would be modest, did not their Parents behaviour seduce them into Love of their Vices. Some Servants have ingenuity in them, and durst

not venture so far into Sin as they do, did not their Master's Example encourage them. *Adam* sins for Companies sake, and 'tis like would have continued stedfast in his ignorance, if he had not seen the Woman eat of the forbidden Tree, and been solicited to imitate her desperate Enterprize. The *Israelites* being mingled among the *Heathen*, learn their Works; and having conversed long with the *Ægyptians*, who were great Worshippers of Oxen, erect a Calf in the Wilderness of *Sina*: Growing intimate with the *Midianites*, they imitate their Whoredoms, and pollute themselves with strange flesh, go to the Sacrifices of their Gods, and eat of them, and bow down to their Deities. *Joseph* comes to be familiarly acquainted with *Pharaoh's* Courtiers, and an Oath, *By the Life of Pharaoh*, goes down without bogling or reluctance. *Lot* had lived among Men who made nothing of the vilest uncleannesses imaginable, and soon after consents to incestuous Copulation. *Solomon*, by his intimacy with his Concubines, learns to worship Devils; and his Son *Rehoboam*, by making the young Gallants at Court his Familiars, grows rash, even to his own Destruction. Had not *Peter* gone into the High Priest's Hall, 'tis like he would never have been perswaded into Cursings and Imprecations. Converse with Drunkards, by degrees, causes approbation of the Sin, and at last delight in it. And thus it must needs be in the case before us, inconsiderate Men make others as supine and negligent as themselves; and he that lets his Acquaintance with them grow into Familiarity, will be apt to think, that

sure he may neglect Consideration of his Ways, as well as they; if they venture, why may not he? And if they think not the Omission prejudicial to their spiritual Interest, why should he terrifie himself with counterfeit Thunder? If they hope to do well after this, why may not he? And if they fear no revenging Arm, why should he make his Life miserable by thinking of Punishment?

Imprudent Men indeed! You may have seen others hang, or drown, or burn themselves; but is this a temptation to you to follow them? You may have seen a passionate Fool throw himself down from a Precipice, because he could not enjoy the reciprocal affection of the Party he doted on, but doth any of you think this distraction merits imitation? Because such a Man ruins himself and his Family, have you a mind to do so too? Because such an one doth not mind his Trade, but lies in Ale-houses and Taverns, must you necessarily make him your Pattern? Because such a Man disregards the Favour of his Friends, that are both able and willing to assist him, is that an argument, that you must needs learn his ways? Because such an one lets his Garden run to Weeds, must you therefore fill yours with Briars and Thorns? Because such an one embezles his Estate, must you therefore spend yours in riotous Living? And will you storm the Gates of Hell, because others are so desperate as to do it? Will you howl with Devils, because others delight in that Musick? Will you scorn the Offers of Salvation, because others will not be drawn by the Cords of Love? Will you run the Hazard of losing the light of God's Countenance
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for ever, because others know not how to prize it ?

O my Soul, be not thou tempted by these weak Arguments, follow not a Multitude to do evil. Let not the Way that leads to Destruction invite thee, because many there be that find it. Company, whatever refreshment it may be in Chains or Prisons here, can afford but little Consolation in eternal Flames. Company there will but increase Mens Sorrows, and Society heighten their Woes and Torments; in that *Tophet* one will not be able to help the other, and the shrieks of him that was seduced into Sin, will but aggravate the Groans and Anguish of the Seducer, when he must remember, that he was that Devil that dragged the other into endless Tortures. In outward Calamities, such as Poverty, Exile, Banishment, Disgrace, Contempt, Persecution, Society may give some ease, and qualify the Injury; but in anguish of Mind, in tortures of Conscience, Company rather intrages than allays, irritates rather than composes the Grief and Sadness, and such dolours reign in Hell. Strive, strive, O my Soul, to walk in the straight Way. Let not the small Number of Travellers fright thee, 'tis the likelier Way to Heaven, because the great, the mighty, the wise Men of this World, will not stoop to this narrow Gate; for God's Ways are not as our Ways, nor are his Thoughts as our Thoughts; what the World admires, he despises, and what sensual Men make light of, he crowns with Glory, and Splendor, and Immortality: So thou canst but be saved, no Matter how small the Number is of those that arrive

to Happiness. As small as it is, to these belongs the Promise, *Fear not, thou little Flock, for it is your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom of Heaven*, Luke 13. 32.

XI. *Impediment.*

XI. *Neglect of consulting with the Ministers of the Gospel about this necessary Work.* It was God's Command of old, *The Priests lips should keep Knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his Mouth, for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts*, Mal. 2. 7. How mean soever the Age we live in thinks of this Function of Men, as if they were needless Members of a Common-wealth, yet there was never any Nation so barbarous, but after they were civilized into Societies and Government, judged these Men most useful, and most necessary for the preservation of their Common-wealth or Kingdom. Nature hath taught all Mankind to believe a Deity, some Thing which they look upon to be above all created Beings, and from whose Sovereign Command and Will either their Blessings or Misfortunes flow. This Supreme Being they have ever thought themselves obliged to worship, not only in private but in publick too: And that the publick Adoration might strike greater Reverence, and be performed with greater Solemnity, to depute and order certain Persons, a peculiar sort of Men to manage those Sacred Rites and Ceremonies. And indeed, the great eternal God, ever since he hath vouchsafed to plant a Church in the World, hath been pleased to make it one great Cha-

Character and Mark of his Favour and Bounty to Her, to give Her Teachers, and Prophets, and Evangelists. And the Commission he hath granted these Men, the Titles and Honours he hath conferred on them, and the Love and Reverence he hath commanded all Men to express towards them, the Promise he hath made them, to be with them unto the end of the World, the threatnings he hath pronounced against those that shall disparage their Office, and undervalue their Function and Doctrine, the Precepts and Rules he hath left them to proclaim in the Ears of an unbelieving World, evidently declare, That they are Ambassadors of the great King of Heaven, which in Christ's stead, beseech Men to be reconciled unto God; and that he that receives the Word they deliver from the Mouth of God, receives him that sent them.

In these Gospel Days, 'tis true, there is shed abroad a larger Measure of God's Spirit, than was formerly known under the Jewish Oeconomy, and Men under the new Covenant are promised to be taught of the Lord. *They shall not teach every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know me from the Least to the Greatest,* Heb. 8. 11. Yet that doth not make this Function of Men needless, but enforces rather the absolute and indispenfible Necessity of their Office and Authority. For besides, That this Promise doth eminently relate to the Primitive Christians, who were made Partakers of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, and had their Knowledge and Learning from above, there-

thereby to fit them the better for the Propagation of a new Religion; if we suppose, that the Prophecy must extend to all that profess themselves Christians, the Meaning of it can be no more but this, That God will use a more gentle Way, in converting Men under the Gospel, and in that Conversion, or inclining their Hearts to his Commands, give such lively Representations of the reasonableness of them, and so convince them of their agreeableness to the Law of Nature, or the Law written in their Hearts, that they shall not need to be put in mind by their Neighbours, of their Justice, and Equity, and Spirituality. They that have thought that this Promise respects the Life to come, have certainly been regardless of the Apostle's drift and purpose, who intends to declare what People under the Gospel Dispensation may expect from God, and his speaking to us in these last Days of his Son; and what Method God means to use in converting Sinners from their evil Ways: Sin shall be made so odious, so loathsome to their Souls, that they shall abhor it as much as they loved it before, and the Ways of God shall be represented to them by the Holy Ghost, working on their Hearts in such lively Colours, that they will need no Monitor to embrace them.

But then this gracious Promise doth not exclude, but presupposes still the Means of Conversion, of which the Ministry of the Word be not the least; and if the Ministry of the Word is intended as a standing Ordinance, in order to those kindly Operations of God's Spirit, in the Hearts of those that shall be converted; and God

be peremptorily resolved by the Preaching of the Word, to work on the Souls of Men, none hath Reason to find Fault with the Contrivance of the Almighty, but rather admire his Wisdom and Goodness, that shines through this Dispensation; not to mention, as God under the Gospel obliges Men to greater Knowledge than formerly, so 'tis fit there should be Men eminent for Knowledge and Piety to instruct others, and who like Candles set on Candlesticks, may light the rest, and by *Urim* and *Thummim* of their Doctrine and Purity, lead them and encourage them to prepare for Heaven. And if notwithstanding the prodigious Gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out in the primitive Times upon all Flesh, God thought it necessary to give Apostles, and Teachers, and Pastors, when the illapses of the Spirit could teach Men what their Pastors were to teach them; how much more necessary, may we think, must the Ministry be now, when those extraordinary Gifts have ceased, and the Generality of Men are sunk into monstrous Ignorance, Inconsiderateness, and Stupidity?

Indeed these are the Men whom God hath placed in the Church, to direct others in the way to Salvation; with whom the Ignorant are to consult, what they must do to be happy for ever: Such Persons are therefore called Stars, and Lights, which may influence the Minds and the Lives of the Ignorant, warm them with their Zeal, conduct them by their Brightness, lead them by their Shine, and shew them the Rocks and Shelves they are to avoid. And as
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upon a wrong Information given by the Teacher, God is resolved to require the seduced Party's Blood at his hand; so no Man, that hath a Tongue in his Head to inquire, can with any Justice excuse himself from inquiring of these Men, what it is that the Lord his God requires of him. And were this Method followed in the Case before us, and did Men seriously demand of them, which way to compass an effectual Consideration of their Soul-concerns; here they might be informed and instructed, and undeceived in the Errors of their Ways.

The Truth is, some are so civil as to send for us, when the Breath is going out of their Body, and give us Leave to come and teach them what they must do to be saved, when the Physician gives them over, and they are ready to be summoned to appear before the great Tribunal: They are contented we should give them an Epitome of their Duties, when they are past working in God's Vineyard; and furnish their Minds with thoughts of Heaven and Eternity, when their Understandings are as weak as their Bodies, and their inward Man as languid and feeble as their outward. But there needs no great store of Arguments to convince any rational Man, that this is meer mocking of God and his Messengers; 'tis a sign Religion is much like Physick to them, which they do not make use of but in cases of Necessity, and when nothing else will do them good; 'tis a sign they have a pitiful low Esteem of another World, who think Heaven worth no more than a feeble Thought, when they can serve the Devil
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and Sin no longer: 'Tis a sign they look upon Eternal Glory, as some poor beggarly Happiness, who cannot vouchsafe it a serious Look till their Eyes grow dim, *and the Sun and the Moon and the Light and the Stars are darkned,* Ecclef. 12. 2.

Would they but send for us, or come to us, while Marrow is in their Bones, and their Blood brisk and lively in their Veins, their Reason strong, and their Understanding in its full Vigour and Glory, and advise with us about these everlasting Things; we would then tell them, what Eternal Life means, and how no Man can be a Man, or be said to act with common Prudence, that doth not with all Diligence make his Calling and Election sure; we would then let them see how many Thousands perish for want of thinking of Eternity. We would let them see how miserable those Mens Condition must needs be, who have their Portion in this Life, who after this Life must look for nothing else but Everlasting Chains of Darkness; we would represent to them, That their long Life here on Earth, except it be adorned with Goodness, is but a long preparation for a longer Misery; and that he that dies full of good Works, though at Thirty Years of Age, hath lived much longer, than he that hath lived an Hundred, and been a Servant of Sin and sensual Delights; for he only lives that lives to God, the rest are dead while they live, and rather take up Room, than live. We could prove to them that these are not Things to be laughed at, but deserve their most serious Contemplations,

tions, and that the saving of a Soul is not so light a Thing as they may imagine. We would let them see, That the pious Kings, and Princes, and Philosophers, Confessors, and Saints and Martyrs of old, whose Memories we adore, were no Fools, when they kept under their Bodies, and brought them into subjection, lest they should become Cast-aways; when they looked upon all the Losses, and Troubles, and Miseries that could befall them for Righteousness Sake, as Things not worthy to be compared with the Glory which e'er long should be revealed in them; when they did not count their own Lives dear for the Gospel of Christ, and were ready to pass through the most daring Flames to Heaven. We would let them see, That those Men had Brains, and were Men of Wisdom and Discretion as well as they, and living so near the Time of Christ and his Apostles, could not possibly be ignorant of what was to be done in order to everlasting Happiness; and if they had not been very confident of the Truth of Christ's Promises, and known for certain, That without strictness and contempt of the World, and watching against Temptations, there was no entering into their Master's Joy, they would never have striven so much to enter in at the straight Gate as they did. We should let them see, That they did rightly apprehend the Design of Christianity, which was to make Men out of love with sublunary Objects, and to mind nothing so much as the Things of the Spirit: That it was not Force, but their Choice, that made them swim against the Current

rent of their fleshly Inclinations, and that what they did, was to instruct us, how we are to inherit the Promises.

We would let them see, how different Mens Thoughts are when they come to die, from what they have when they enjoy Strength, and Health, and Liberty; and that a melancholy Thought now and then concerning their sinful Life, is not Repentance; nor leaving such Sins, which would blemish their Credit and Reputation in the World, doing whatsoever Christ commands them; nor talking now and then of the Vanity of the World, forgetting what is behind them, or crucifying the World unto themselves. We would let them see what the Scripture means, by *working out their Salvation with fear and trembling*; and how dreadful that Saying is, *If the righteous be scarcely saved, Where will the wicked and sinner appear?* We would let them see, That the Expressions the Holy Ghost uses concerning our travelling to the Land of Promise, imply very great Care and Industry, and do plainly intimate, That God will not part with his Heaven to Men, that do not think it worth seeking, or being at any Trouble about it. We would let them see, That if any Thing in the World deserves their Pains and Care, Heaven deserves it infinitely more, as it is of infinitely greater Consequence, than the most boundless Empires or Principalities. We would let them see, That God is no Respector of Persons; and without Holiness, *Helligabilis* is regarded no more than *Codrus*; and *Ptolomy* no more than *Paulsen*; *Gyges* no
more

more than *Aglaus*; and then, as he hath fitted Religion for all Mens Capacities, infomuch that tho' all cannot be Wise, or Learned, or Great, or Rich, yet all may obey him, and keep themselves unspotted from the World, so he will one Day summon every Man to give an Account of his Stewardship, and bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good or evil. We would let them see, that what satisfies Men now, will not give them any great content or satisfaction then, and tho' now some sprinklings of Piety may lull them into a conceit of themselves and of their Worth, yet these, like Blowballs, will then be all, upon the least touch, shattered into Atoms.

By such Discourses as these, we might by Degrees engage them into a serious Consideration of their spiritual Concerns, and warm them into resolutions, to lay by, for some time, the thoughts of their *Baskets*, and of their *Store*, of their *Barns*, and of their *Fields*, and ruminate on things which carry so much Terror and Majesty with them. And indeed such Things, were they heard without Prejudice, would in some measure confound and startle Men in their Courses; and, if they are not given over to a hard Heart, or to a reprobate Mind, rouse their Spirits into nobler Thoughts and Contemplations; they would discover to them, That the love they bear to the World defiles their Souls, vitiates their Charity, hurts their Neighbours, wrongs the Almighty, captivates their Minds, and will most certainly deceive them in the end; and that therefore they had better change the
Object

Object of their Affections, and place them there where permanent Satisfactions are, where our Expectations can never be disappointed, our Desires never frustrated, and our Hopes never baffled; but our Enjoyments will be perpetual, our Fruition everlasting, and our Habitation eternal in the Heavens.

But alas! they shun our Company, except it be to talk of worldly Affairs, or to ask us about some nice Points of Divinity, and are ashamed to make their Condition known, and to own themselves ignorant of the Path that leads to Glory. They either excuse themselves with this, that their Neighbours and their Friends will laugh at them for making Ministers their Oracles; or plead, that they know as much as the Man of God can teach them: Would God they did! and that all the Lord's People were Prophets! But if they did, Is there not some difference between knowing these sacred Truths, and having them set home upon the Conscience? That shall stick in a familiar Discourse, which in reading we take no Notice of; and a Word in private Conference may drop from a holy Man, and may be spoke with that Zeal and Honesty, as shall strike the Soul into a Change or Renovation of Mind, which perhaps many Years study, or a large stock of Knowledge, would not have effected: So that if the Question be asked, *Is there no Balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there? Why then is not the Health of the Daughter of my People recovered?* We may truly say, *We would have healed Israel, but they would not be healed.*

XII. *Impediment.*

XII. *Deluding themselves with the Notion of Christ's dying for the Sins of the World.* Why should they consider how to be rid of Sin, and lay the Pleasures of Piety before their Eyes? Why should they torment themselves with thinking how God's Favour may be purchased, and involve themselves in anxiety and trouble about their Transgressions, when Christ hath done all that is to be done; appeased his Father's Wrath against the lapsed Progeny of *Adam*, and purchased them a glorious Freedom from the slavery of a merciless Law? If he hath satisfied God for the Injuries he received by their sins, why should they make a new Satisfaction by holiness of their Lives? Is not that it which all Pulpits ring of, That the eternal died, that we might not die Eternally; and that God would suffer, that we might escape Torments for ever? That the Innocent was punished for the Nocent, the Judge for the Malefactor, the Master for the Servants, the Just for the Unjust, the Good for the Bad, that we sinned, and he was afflicted; we commit the Crime, and he was condemned; we trespassed, and he was tortured; we exalted our selves, and he was humbled; we were disobedient, and he smarted under the reward of Disobedience; we did eat of the forbidden Tree, and he endured hunger for it; and we tasted of the Apple, and he of the Gall and Vinegar to expiate all? Is it not this that all *Protestant Churches* teach? That Christ

Christ would be crowned with Thorns, that we might have an incorruptible Crown of Glory hereafter; and that he endured Reproach, and Calumnies, and Contradictions of sinners against himself, that we might inherit everlasting Honour! And why should they disparage Christ's Sufferings so much, as to hope to gain Heaven by Mortification of their Lusts, and poring upon their Sin and Misery? This would be to fall back into Popery, and enslave our selves again into Superstition. This would be to make us subject once more to the Law of Works, and to marry us to the Husband, from which we were divorced by Christ's giving up the Ghost, even to the Law which neither we nor our Forefathers were ever able to bear. This would be to undervalue so great a Blessing, and to tell the World, that Christ's purchase of eternal Glory for us was imperfect; and without there be an Addition of our own Works and Merit, that Redemption signifies little, and hath not strength enough to compass what was designed by it?

Thus Men prevent their Consideration of Spiritual Concerns, and dash the checks and motions of their Consciences when prompted to call their Ways to Remembrance. They examine not the end of Christ's death, nor their own Obligations. They run away with the notion that Christ died for them, and are not at all careful to know what his Death signifies; much like heedless Servants, who, before they have half their errand, run away, and when they are come to the place they are sent to, know not what Message to deliver. The Doctrine is pleasing to their Flesh, and that they

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may not lose their pleasure, they'll be sure not to enquire what the true Meaning of it is.

Would they but cast their Eyes upon that Bible, which they believe contains the Oracles of Heaven, they would find that the great Reason why Christ gave himself for us, was *to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purifie unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*, Titus 2. 14. They would find St. Paul was of another Mind, when he wrote to the Romans, *In that Christ died, he died unto Sin once; but in that he lives, he lives unto God*: Likewise, *Reckon ye also your selves to be dead unto Sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal Body, that ye should obey it in the Lusts thereof; neither yield ye your Members as Instruments of unrighteousness unto Sin, but yield your selves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God*, Rom. 6. 10, 11, 12, 13. And that the Apostle is constant to himself, appears from II. Cor. 5. 5. *Christ died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again*.

And indeed, this is no more than common gratitude; so great a Mercy challenges no less than Reformation and Obedience. For lesser Favours Men require far greater Things; for relieving a poor Wretch, we expect continual Attendance; and for giving such a Man a hundred Pounds in his Necessity, we cannot imagine that he will ever be false to us. For Twelve Pence a Day,

a General expects his Soldier, that fights under him, should be true to him; and the Day-labourer is chid, if being hired to go into the Vineyard, he doth not perform the Work he is set about with all Faithfulness. Doth the Husbandman, that sows good Seed in his Field, look for Tares? Or he that plants a Fig-tree expect Fruit contrary to the Nature of the Tree? He that redeems another from *Barbarian* slavery, doth it so much as enter into his Thoughts, that the Wretch can ever be so inhumane, as to despise, and scorn, and vilifie so great a Benefactor? That God could have given Man Access to his Favour and Reconciliation some meaner Way, than through the Cross and Death of Christ, is very probable; for what may not infinite Goodness do? What may not the Fountain of Mercy do? What may not he do, whose Bowels of Compassion surpass the Understandings of Men and Angels? But it seems he would not. This Remedy was his choice, he would pitch upon this stupendious Way, to amaze and astonish Men into Holiness and Seriousness. He thought Men could not possibly avoid being Converts, and heavenly minded, when they should see the Son of God wading through Blood and Death to rescue them from Hell. God looked upon the Mercy to be so dreadful, and the Kindness to be so full of Majesty and Compassion together, that he thought the incomprehensibleness of the Favour would carry Terror with it, and fright Men into Repentance and Contrition.

He thought Men would have so much Sense and modesty in them, as not to rush through ago-

nies and torments, and groans and sobs, and sighs and tears, and wounds and stripes of the Son of God into eternal destruction. He thought those Thorns and Nails that wounded that Sacred Head, would scratch and sting them into awe and reverence of so great a Love; as they were rolling into eternal Flames, He thought they must divest themselves of all humanity and Self-love, if under the Cross of Christ they could pursue their own Damnation, and make the Streams of that Blood a River to carry them into eternal Darknefs.

But thou hast seen, O God, and beholdest, and canst not but behold it with Sorrow and Indignation, how these Men, that pretend to be Christians, live the reverse of thy designs! How they improve the Cross of Christ into affronts of thy Power and Glory! How, under that Tree of Life, they work out their own Death! And how that precious Blood doth but encourage them to bid defiance to Heaven; and the Sweat and the Toil of the Son of God, under the burthen of their Sins, makes them sweat and toil, to fall a prey to the merciless Clutches of the Devil! *If I had not come*, saith Christ, *they had had no Sin*, i. e. Their sin would not have been so great as now it is, *John* 15. 22. So it is, if the Son of God had not spilt his Blood, and had Men disobeyed, their Disobedience would have received an ordinary Recompence of Reward; but trampling on the Blood of the Son of God, that is a Thing which must needs make God's Indignation inexpressible, and astonishing.

God indeed reconciled the World unto himself; and Christ, by his Death, purchased that Reconciliation and eternal Life; but there is a great Difference between the Purchase of these Blessings, and the application of them; between the possibility of possessing, and the actual Enjoyment of them. A man may buy an Estate, and intend it for the use of such and such Persons; but when he hath bought it for them, may lawfully tie them up to certain Conditions upon which they shall enjoy the Estate; or, in case they neglect these Conditions, go without it. A King that is justly offended with his Subjects, and, for their notorious Rebellion, hath designed them all for Ruin and Destruction, upon some noble Attempt, and generous Enterprize of his only Son, the Prince, may be moved, or brought to a willingness to pass by their Crimes; but when the King's good Will is obtained, the Prince may justly appoint some Condition, upon which the condemned Wretches shall receive their great Master's Favour. And as upon the Kings good Inclination to be Friends with his Subjects, it doth not follow that he is actually reconciled to every one, there being some Conditions required, upon which the Pardon shall be signed and sealed to every one of them in particular; so neither do all Men effectually share in that Reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ, but those that turn to God with all their Hearts, and with all their Souls, and are weary of Sin, and heavy laden with the sense of it, and, in sober sadness, resolved to submit to Christ's Yoke and Government; and accordingly such are called, as are

resolved to walk in the Light, even as God is in the Light, and to be like *Christ Jesus*, and to express the power of Christianity in their Lives, and to attain to such Christian Qualifications as are required in the Gospel, by the use of external Means, and internal Aids; for though all Mankind share in the possibility of enjoying this Reconciliation, and the pardon may be only said to be purchased for them, and for their use, yet all are not made partakers of the actual Possession of it, because all Men will not consent to fulfil the Conditions upon which that Reconciliation is offered them, *viz.* unfeigned Repentance, and sincere Obedience for the Time to come. That 'tis offered on these Conditions, the whole Gospel witnesses; and he betrays his Ignorance that makes Advantage of this Doctrine, and lessens his Care, Diligence and Zeal, in working out his Salvation, in governing his Spirit, and Appetite, and in perfecting Holiness in the fear of God.

Shimei was a Man condemned to Death, I. *Kings* 2. 36. 'Tis like, some Courtiers of *Solomon* got him his Pardon; The King grants it, but requires this one Thing of him, That he should build him a House in *Jerusalem*, and dwell there, and go not from thence any Whither; and fulfilling this Condition, without all Peradventure he might have liv'd happily and safe as the best of his Neighbours; but when he must needs be running after his Servants, and prefer a small Advantage before perpetual Safety, he justly suffers the Punishment the King appointed for him. The Son of God,
by

by the Blood of his Cross, hath in truth gotten all Christians their Pardon, but is resolved none shall enjoy it, but those that will forsake their Sins, and resign themselves to his Guidance and Direction. A reasonable Demand, a Condition so equitable, so just, so easie, that no Man in his Wits but may say as *Skimei* unto *Solomon*, *The Saying is good, as my Lord the King has said, so will thy Servant do.* But then, if the Pardon the Son of God hath obtained for them appear so inconsiderable a Thing in their Eyes, that they do not think it worth enjoying, (and certainly they do not think it worth enjoying, that will not agree to so reasonable a Condition) no Marvel if they fall a Prey to that Wrath, from which the Son of God is ready to deliver them, and if their Blood be upon their Heads, that *do despight unto the Spirit of Grace, and count the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith they were to be sanctified, an unholy Thing.* An Affront so great, that no ordinary Vengeance can expiate it: And should God ask them, as the Prophet *Nathan* did *David*, what Punishment they themselves thought fit for such Offenders, (provided they did not know that they were the Persons concerned) they would, no doubt, doom themselves to as great, if not greater Plagues, than God intends to inflict upon them.

When *Amurath*, Emperor of the *Turks*, had Notice given him, That a Doctor of Law had cheated a poor Pilgrim that was gone to *Mecca*, and at the Man's Return would not restore to him the Jewels he had entrusted with him, but

resolutely denied that he had received any such Things from him: The Emperor one Day, in a third Person, asked the Doctor, What he thought a Man, that had notoriously betrayed his Trust, might justly deserve? He answered, *It was fit that so notorious a Villain should be pounded alive in a Mortar.* He had no sooner said the Word, but the Emperor gave Order that so it should be done to him, who had so notoriously cozened the poor Pilgrim.

So here, as harsh as such Men as continue in their sins may think it to be doom'd to eternal Vengeance, were themselves in the third Person asked, What was fit to be done to such ungrateful Monsters? Themselves would give the same Sentence against themselves, for putting so notorious an Affront upon so astonishing a Mercy.

So that altho' a true Believer, and a sincere Penitent, may boldly say with the Apostle, *That Christ hath redeemed him from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for him*, Gal. 3. 13. And that *Christ hath washed him from his Sins with his own Blood*, Rev. 1. 5. And that he hath an *Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the Propitiation for his Sins*, I. John 2. 1. And, that *Christ hath made his Peace with God*, Colof. 1. 20. Yet Men, that are Strangers to the sanctifying Work of God's Spirit, cannot be said to have at present, during their unregenerate Estate, any other Benefit by the Death and Passion of Christ, but a possibility of all those great and glorious Advantages; and it is possible for them to be freed from the Curse of the Law, to be admitted into the

the Number of those that shall be saved; to enjoy the remission of Sins, to escape the Wrath to come, and to see God Face to Face in Heaven, and all this by virtue of Christ's Death; if they will but shake Hands with their darling Vices, and agree to a practical Love of their Maker, and Redeemer, and Sanctifier. To think that unconverted Sinners do actually enjoy these Benefits, is to contradict Scripture, and to give the Apostles of our Lord the Lye, who unanimously tell us, That these Mercies are not effectually applied to the Soul, till the Soul by sincere Repentance, and Reformation of Life, applies her self to *Christ Jesus*.

And indeed, this is the prodigious Mercy of the Second Covenant, That God, for Christ's Sake, will accept of sincere Repentance, instead of perfect Obedience, (which was the great Condition of the first Agreement between God and Man) and looking upon the precious Blood of his Son, will pass by whatever Men have done before, if they will be in love with sin and destruction no longer, and sincerely endeavour to please him in those Commands, which design nothing but our Interest and Happiness.

These things are not very hard to be understood, but the generality of Christians seem resolved not to understand them, that they may not be obliged to take their Ways into serious Consideration. At this Rate they can serve two Masters, and reconcile Light with Darkness, God and *Belial*, the Temple of God and Idols, Frost and Heat, Snow and Fire; please God and please the World; gratifie their Lusts,
and

and secure Heaven ; build Tabernacles here, and secure Mansions hereafter ; keep in with God and Man, and like the *Samaritans*, II. *Kings* 17. 41. fear the Lord, and serve Graven Images. This Doctrine, That *Christ* hath freed them from the Wrath of God, in their Sense, makes Religion sit soft and easie upon them, and doth not disturb them in their sensual Enjoyments. 'Tis a comfortable Doctrine to Flesh and Blood ; Never could any Thing have been invented more agreeable to their Lusts ; and if God had studied to do them a Kindness, he could not have done them a greater, than to let his Son suffer all that is to be suffered by them ; and so after their Delights and sinful Satisfactions here, conduct them into a far more glorious Paradise. If it be so, truly Consideration is Vanity, and the Preachers are Fools and Mad-men to press it upon their Auditors : Spiritual Men are distracted, and fitter for *Bedlam* than the *Pulpit*. Their Religion is nothing but a Trick, and they keep a great stir to no Purpose ; Cry aloud, but edifie not ; and lift up their Voices merely to trifle away Time, and confirm the House of *Jacob* in their Sins. But who sees not that this is an Invention of the Devil, first to darken the Sinners Understanding, and when the Candle is out, to rob him of his everlasting Happiness !

And, first, will you be robbed thus quietly of your Bliss and Glory ? Will you suffer your selves to be stript of all you have, without the least Opposition ? Is it possible for you to believe, That the Son of God came down from Heaven to encourage

courage you in offending God; and made himself of no Reputation for you, that you might render your selves contemptible in the sight of the Almighty; and died for you, to give Life to your Sins and Follies? How absurd, how impertinent, how contradictory is this Belief? How! God, and encourage sin? Holiness itself, and find out a Way to promote Iniquity? Can there be any Thing in Nature more silly or ridiculous? This is abusing the Cross of *Christ*, not trusting to it; and you that make it an Occasion of Sin, take heed it do not prove a stumbling block unto you, and instead of crucifying Sin in you, do not harden you in it! It is a Thing not unusual with God, to punish Sin with Sin; and if Men will be filthy, in despite of all Endeavours to purifie them from their filthiness, to doom them to continue filthy still, and to make that their Judgment, which at first was only their Transgression; *Because there is no Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge of God in the Land, but Stealing, and committing Adultery, therefore your Daughters shall commit Whoredom, and your Spouses shall commit Adultery, saith God, Hos. 4. 1, 2, 13. i. e.* I will utterly withdraw my Grace, and my holy Spirit from you; whence it must necessarily come to pass, That you will sink deeper and deeper in your Sins, till you sink into the nethermost Hell; and that which was your delight, shall prove your burthen, and your Joy shall be your Plague; and when afterwards you shall see what you have brought your selves to, and would fain step back, you shall not be able, but die in your Sins. A Judgment enough

nough to make a Man's Hair stand on end, and yet it is but reasonable, especially in this point, of making light of the Death of *Christ Jesus*; so great a Love, and written in such legible Characters too, slighted and abused, and made a Help to Sin, improved into Licentiousness, may justly be supposed to draw down that Judgment we read of, *Iſa. 6. 9. 10. Go and tell this People, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the Heart of this People fat, and make their Ears heavy, and shut their Eyes; lest they see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and convert and be healed.*

But what is worse than all this, the Death of the Son of God, which thus, instead of mortifying, makes Sin reign in your mortal Bodies, will be the greatest Witness against you in the last Day. *The stone shall cry out of the Wall, and the Beam of the Timber shall answer against the Oppressor*, saith the Prophet, *Hab. 2. 11.* And then sure Blood hath a louder Voice, *Heb. 12. 14.* and the Blood of a Crucified Saviour will be one day the greatest Evidence against you. This, like Oil, will encrease your Flames, and prove the Brimstone, that shall make the Fire blaze the more. That *Jesus*, whose Cross thou despisest now, will be thy Accuser then; and woe to that Man that hath the Judge himself for his Enemy. That dreadful Spectacle, the Crucifixion of the Lord of Life, which cannot engage thy Soul to consider the Indignation, Abhorrency, and Hatred God bears to Sin, will be the great Argument then, that shall
cover

cover thy Face with everlasting Confusion. As lovely, as charming, as amiable as this Mercy looks now, it will look as dismal then; and that which is now thy Anchor, will be thy Terror then; and thou wilt run away from Mercy as much then as thou dost from God's Thunder now; for thou wilt not be able to look upon this Mercy without blushing, and to think how thou hast undervalued it, will make thee ready to hide thy self from its Brightness. Every Beam will dart horror into thy Soul, and every Ray will be an arrow in thy Heart. When thou shalt see in that day *the Spirits of Men made perfect*; the Men in White, who *have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb*; when thou shalt reflect on their Happiness, a Happiness which thou mightest have had as well as they, (if that Blood could have persuaded thee to cleanse thy self from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit) how will thine Eyes flow with Tears, to think what strong Delusions thou hast lain under, in thinking that this Blood was only spilt that thou mightest wallow more freely in the Mire. The Lamb which was slain from the Foundation of the World, and came to take away thy sins as well as thy Neighbours, only thou wouldst not be clean; that Lamb, I say, as harmless as its Looks are now, will then change his Aspect; and thou, that now thinkest a Lamb can be nothing but kind, wilt then find by woeful Experience that there is such a Thing as the Indignation and *Wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. 6. 16.



C H A P. V.

Of the various Mischiefs arising from neglect of Consideration. The want of it proved to be the Cause of most Sins. Some Instances are given in Atheism, Unbelief, Swearing, Pride, Carelessness in God's Service, Luckwarmness, Covetousness, &c.

FROM what has been said, we may safely draw this Conclusion, That want of Consideration is the unhappy Spring, from which most of the Miseries and Calamities of Mankind flow. There may be inferior and subordinate Causes, as the Barrenness of a Field may proceed from the Thorns which overspread it, from the Stones which lie scattered upon it, from want of Dunging, from the Rushes that grow in it, &c. but the principal Cause is the Sluggard's Idleness and Laziness; so here the Miseries of Mankind may owe their Existence to various Accidents and Occurrences, but the Master-cause is want of Consideration. Indeed, God, *Isa. 5. 12, 13.* makes this the great Reason *why his People were gone into Captivity; why their honourable Men were famished, and their Multitude dried up with thirst; why Hell had enlarged her self, and opened her Mouth without measure, and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, descended into it.* 'Tis the want of it which in all Ages hath procured God's Judgments, which by
Consi-

Consideration might have been stopt and prevented. Had *Adam* improved his Solitariness in the Garden of *Eden*, into serious Consideration of the Nature of the Precept his Master gave him, and reflected on the Wisdom of the Supreme Law-giver that made it; on the immense Bounty his great Benefactor had crowned him withal; on the abominable Ingratitude he would make himself guilty of by breaking so reasonable an Injunction; had he but recollected himself, (when tempted to eat of the dangerous Fruit, under a pretence that it would open his Eyes, and make him as wise as God) and thought that the Creator of Heaven and Earth knew best what Degree of wisdom and knowledge became a Creature of his Quality and Condition; and he that was all Love, and Beauty, and Kindness, would not have interdicted him that Fruit if the Food might have any Way advanced his Happiness, and that therefore there must be some Cheat in the Temptation; That the Angels, which were lately thrown down from their Glory, could not but envy the Felicity he enjoyed, and for that Reason would appear in all Manner of shapes, and try a thousand Ways to weaken the Favour of God towards him; and that it was, without all peradventure, the safest Way to prefer an express Command before an uncertain Suggestion: That it was below the Almighty to say and unsay; to forbid, and yet permit; to caution, and yet to connive; to declare his Will to Day, and countermand it to Morrow; and that such Weaknesses are scarce reconcilable to the Temper of a wise Man on

Earth, much less to the Rules of Infinite Wisdom: Had his Mind taken a View of such Arguments as these, and of the uninterrupted Prosperity and Immortality he was promised upon his Obedience; 'tis not the Charms, or Rhetorick, or soft Language of a Wife, nor the Subtlety of a Serpent, nor the pretended Omniscience the Devil flatter'd him withal, would have made him leave that happy state which the Infinite Goodness of Heaven had placed him in. But while he suffers the Pleasure of a Garden to transport his Soul, and to blind it, fears no Ill, no Mischiefe, no Danger among the Roses and Flowers of Paradise, embraces the deceitful Suggestion, without examining the Cause, the Manner, or the end of it; swallows the fatal Bait without chewing; believes a Wife, and a Beast, without considering the Consequence of the Fact, and inquires not how God may resent his Curiosity; he falls into Death and Misery, and drags all his Posterity after him.

Had the Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* reflected like rational Men, on the Reproofs and Admonitions of Righteous *Lot*, ruminated on his passionate Expressions, taken notice of the Motives he used, of the Incouragements he alledged, of the Commission he produced, of the Authority by which he acted, considered the kindness of the Almighty in sending them such a Preacher, and thought with themselves, That sure it could not be the Preacher's Interest to set himself against their Vices: That except Conscience and a Divine Commission had prompted him to attempt their Reformation, it was not pro-

probable he would enrage a debauched City against himself, and make himself obnoxious to the Fury of the People; That the Righteous Man spake nothing but Reason, and fought nothing but their Good; That God's Patience would certainly be tired e'er long, and his Long-suffering turn into Vengeance; That the Fire of their Lust would shortly pull down other Fire, and the heat of their unclean Desires break into more consuming Flames: That sins against Nature made Men worse than Beasts; and for God not to revenge such Crimes, would certainly give the World Occasion to believe there was no Governor that took care of Sublunary Objects, or be a Means to destroy Human Society: That God would not always put up Affronts, nor suffer his Methods to reclaim them, to be baffled everlastingly: That they could not hope to escape God's Indignation, no more than the Men of the first World, and when their Sins were equal, God's Judgments would overtake them, as well as they did their Brethren: That God could intend them no Harm, by calling them to Repentance, and being the great Preserver of Men, could not but design their Well-being and Felicity: Had they suffered their Thoughts to dwell on such Truths as these, made such Considerations familiar to their Souls, they would have melted and humbled themselves, and kept back that Fire and Brimstone, which afterwards consumed them. Want of Consideration made them secure in Sin, and that Security prepared them for their Devastation.

Indeed, there is no sin almost but is committed for want of Consideration. Men consider not what sin is, nor how loathsome it is to that God, who carries them on his Wings as the Eagle doth her Young, nor what Injury they do to their own Soul, nor what the dreadful Effects and Consequences of it are, and that makes them supine and negligent of their Duty.

To give a few instances: Did the Athiest but look up to Heaven; did his swinish and brutish Appetite but give him leave to contemplate that glorious Fabrick, the orderly Position of the Stars, the regular Motion of those Celestial Lamps, and the Mathematical Contrivance of that curious Globe; how it is possible he could dream of a casual Concurrence of *Atoms*, or forbear to acknowledge a most wise, most perfect, and most powerful Architect, even that God who commanded them into Being, and still preserves them from Decay and Ruin?

Would he but consider, how things that have a beginning could not make themselves, unless they were *before* they were (which implies a contradiction) and therefore must certainly be made, and produced at first by some supreme Cause that is Eternal and Omnipotent. Would he but reflect on the universal Consent of Mankind, how not only the civilized but the most barbarous Nations in all Ages have had a Sense of a Deity; and how this Sense never changes, altho' Kingdoms and Republicks, their Government, Laws, Constitutions, Inhabitants, and Customs change; and how improbable it is that all Mankind should conspire into such a Cheat, if there were

no supream Power; how rational it is, that when Men of different Constitutions, Complexions, Principles, Desires, Interests, Opinions, do all or most of them agree in one Thing, there must necessarily be something more than ordinary in it, and the Notion must be supposed either imprinted by God on the Hearts of all Men, or carefully delivered to Posterity by the first Planters of the World, which in all Probability they would not have done, except they had very good Ground and Reason for it; and tho' here and there some Few have been found, who either out of Ambition of being thought Wits, or in a Humour, or through some strange Corruption of their Minds, have denied the Being of a Deity, or have believed none, yet that those Few are inconsiderable, compared with the greatest Part of Mankind, and guided rather by their Lusts and Vices, whose Interest it is there should be no God to take Notice of them, and not by the true Light of Reason: Would the Fool, I say, but think seriously on these familiar Arguments, how could he say in his Heart *There is no God?*

How could the Wretch deny a Providence, if he did but take notice, how all Things are preserved in those stations, spheres, and tendencies, they were at first created in. How Things contrary to one another, are kept from destroying one another. How every Thing prosecutes the End for which it was produced. How the Sea that's higher than the Earth, is kept from over-running and drowning it. How Kingdoms, Empires, and Common-wealths, are continued

and conserved in the World. How one Country is made a Scourge to the other for their Sin; and how the sober Nation many Times conquers the more debauched and vicious, till the former sobriety dying proves a presage of the Funeral of their Happiness. How Men are suffered to tyrannize, and to rage, that their Fall afterward may be more grievous and terrible. How Sin is punished with Sin; and with what Measure we meet, with the same other Men meet to us again. How strangely Murder is found out, and

Sueton. in Calig. secret Villanies discovered, arraigned, and condemned. How *Caligula*, that bids Defiance to Heaven, and threat-

ens *Jupiter* to chastise him, if he sent Rain that Day his Players were to act; how the poor miserable Creature hides his Head in a Feather-bed when it Thunders; and how the stoutest Sinners tremble, even then when no Man pursues them. How *Tiberius* is tortured in his Conscience with a Sense of his Monstrous Practices; and he that had despised all Heavenly Powers, before his Death, dreads what before he laughed at. How Light is frequently produced out of Darkness; the greatest Felicity from the greatest Misery; and even sin itself so ordered, that it proves an Occasion of the greatest Good. How miraculously Men are preserved, and how prodigiously rescued from Dangers that hang over their Heads, and threaten their Destruction. How one Man is punished by Prosperity, another preserved by the want of it. How one Man's Blessings are turned into Curses, and another Man's
Curses

Curses into Blessings. How Men perish, that they may not perish; and are suffered to grow poor, that they may be rich; and are deprived of all, that they may arrive to far greater Plenty. How strangely many Times are Men preserv'd from sin, and something comes in and crosses their sinful Attempts and Intentions, that they are not able to put their Purposes in Execution. How Men are fitted for several Employments; and no Office, or Business so mean and sordid, but some Men have a Genius or Inclination to it. How Beasts, which are stronger than Men, are yet kept from hurting Men; and Men themselves that intend Mischief to their Neighbours, are prevented in their Designs, and in the Net they spread for others their Foot is taken. How by very inconsiderable Means, very great Things are effected; and sometimes without Means, very signal Changes and Alterations are produced. How the greatest Preparations are blown upon, and dissolved, and a handful of Men chase vast and potent Armies. How Tyrants, when they are just bringing their Triumphs to perfection, are blasted on a sudden; and when they fancy nothing can resist or hinder their mighty Designs, the Wind turns, and all their Bravery dies into contempt, and shame, and dissatisfaction. How the greatest Enemy sometimes becomes the greatest Friend; and he that hateth another unto Death, is on a sudden convinced of his Folly, and loves him as his own Soul. How kindly the Heavens dispense their former and latter Rain; and how upon solemn Prayers and Supplications, some great

Judgment is averted, and Men restored to their former Peace and Tranquility. How, even in Things fortuitous, Justice is executed; and the Arrow which such a Man shot at random, is yet guided, as to hit the Person guilty of some heinous Crime. How such a Man's Ruine proves another's Instruction; and he, whom Education could not engage to Prudence, learns to be wise by another's Fall. How Men ignorantly contrive their Neighbour's Good, and while they least intend the Happiness of others, take the readiest Course to make their Labour successful and prosperous. How a Flea shall awaken an *Akashuerus*, that he may look into his Chronicles, and read the good Offices of *Mordecai*, and recompence him, and prevent the Mischiefs intended against God's People. How a Word, that drops sometimes from the Preacher's Mouth in a Sermon, shall make that Impression on the Hearer's Heart as to change it, and work him into another Man.

He that would take such Passages as these into serious Consideration, how were it possible for him to question a Providence, that orders, and rules, and governs all, and extends its care even to the least, most minute, and most abject and contemptible Creature? How could he forbear to admire God, as the most wise, most knowing, most lovely, most perfect, most holy, and most bountiful Being, *whose Eyes run to and fro to show himself strong in the Behalf of those, whose Heart is upright towards him*, II. Chron. 16. 9.

The Unbeliever, that doth not believe the Scripture to be the Word of God, and fancies there

there is no other World, no Judgment after Death; and thinks it irrational, that Temporal Sin should be punished with an Eternity of Torments; 'Tis want of Consideration makes him continue Infidel.

For 1st, As for the Scripture which contains the Sum and Substance of the Christian Religion, would he but take a Walk in the Field, or in his Garden, or in his Chamber, and weigh the Arguments which make for the Divinity of this Book, and consider what he can object against it, whether his Objections be equal in strength and weight with the Reasons that fetch its Pedigree from Heaven, he would soon be of another Mind, and pity the weakness and sauciness of those Youngsters, that play with the Oracles of God in Ale-Houses, or Taverns, or Theatres. He need only discourse with himself in this Manner.

I see the whole Christian World, for so many Centuries together, hath embraced these Sacred Volumes, as the Treasury of God's Will and Ordinances, as a Directory dropt down from Heaven, to teach them how God will be worshipped, what Notions they are to entertain of God, and what they are to do to save their Souls for ever; how they are to order their Lives, how they are to Pray, how they are to behave themselves towards God and Man, and what Rules they are to observe in their Thinking, Speaking, Doing, and Dealing in the World. 'Tis very probable, that God, who is all Goodness, all Mercy, and of infinite Pity, and hath made this World to serve Man, and endowed him

him with a Capacity of knowing and adoring God, would not leave him destitute of such helps and means, as might best promote his knowledge of him; but find out a Way to manifest himself to him, especially when 'tis evident, That without some better Directions than Nature gives, Men are so very apt to fall into Errors and Misapprehension of his Glory and Majesty. Whether this Book contains therefore the true Revelations which God hath been pleased to make to Mankind, is the Question.

Upon examination I find, that there is nothing in this Book, either promised, or threatned, or commanded, but what is *Deo dignum*, fit for a God to promise, and threaten, and command.

Whatever is delivered here, seems to be very agreeable to his Majesty, and Sovereignty, and Divine Nature. The Rewards as well as punishments are God-like; and the Duties pressed here, are but the necessary Consequence of his Goodness, and Justice, and Government, and Supremacy; which Consequences, because Man, by reason of his Corruption, was not able to deduce from the Notion of God, God thought fit to reveal and manifest to him, by various Passages, Histories, Prophecies, Parables, Precepts, and Conclusions.

Upon enquiry I perceive, that the Designs of this Book are at least very harmless, its great Aim being to make Men good, and just, and honest, and live like Men of Reason; so that if Men quarrel with it, they must quarrel with their own Make, and Constitution, which is not only capable of such perfections, but, were the grosser sensual

Objects removed, or separated from it, would naturally desire and breathe after them. Whatever Verity or Truth, the light of Nature, or Reason dictates, is here to be found; and this Book is so far from contradicting, or abolishing, any Thing of that Nature, that it improves and refines it. If I search all the Volumes of the ancient Heathen Philosophers, Men who ransack'd Nature, and tried what Nature would discover of God, and anatomized the Law written upon Mens Heart: If I peruse all the Lessons and Rules of Morality they gave and prescribed to Mankind, I find them all delivered in this Book, much purer, and much clearer, than those Philosophers were able to propose them; and what lies scattered up and down in their vaster Volumes, is concenter'd here, insomuch that not only Scholars, but very ordinary Capacities, may be Philosophers, and speak more Sense and Reason than the ancient Wits, whom the World, when barbarous and rude, looked upon as Oracles.

The Sacred Writers, whoever they were, for ought I see, were Men of very noble and generous Spirits, for their great Endeavour is, to instruct and edifie Mankind, and to teach them such Delights, as are fit for a rational Soul to embrace. I see, they exhort Men to live like themselves, like Persons capable of conversing with God. I see they are all for Preservation of Human Societies, and to this end, they speak against all that's Evil, and encourage Justice, and Peace, and Unity, and Charity, and Obedience to Governours, and all that's Good and Holy; and condemn all Hypocrisie, commend upright Dealing,
and

and sincerity of Heart, and prescribe even those Sins which the World can take no Notice of, Sins of Thoughts, Sins of the Heart, and Sins of Secrecy, and urge a hearty unfeigned Love to our Neighbour. Their great care and solicitude is, that Men may not be kept unacquainted with themselves; and tho' they lived in different Ages, at different Times, and were of different Educations, yet they all agree in their great Endeavour and Design to purifie Men's Hearts, and to keep their Consciences void of Offence towards God and towards Men. They would have God worshipped and honoured like a God, in Spirit and in Truth, and require the Cream and Marrow of our Endeavours, our dearest and tenderest Love to be given to him, which indeed is a Worship fit for him that is our Supream Ruler and Governour, in whom we live, and have our Being.

They condemn all Sensuality, which makes Men live like Beasts; and all Impatience, and Discontent, which makes their Lives miserable; and all Pride and Haughtiness, which makes their near Neighbours hate and despise them; and all base Selfishness, which makes them uncompassionate. They prescribe the greatest Cordials against Crosses and Afflictions, for they promise a better Life after this, a Life of everlasting Joy and Bliss; and tho' *Moses* and the Prophets say but little of another Life in express Terms, yet they do it in Types and Shadows, and mysterious Phrases and Actions, which the Prophets among the *Jews* in all Probability explained to the People; and suppose there were

were no such Life, yet would the Fancy of it be mighty pleasing in Distresses and Calamities, and serve to bear us up under the greatest Burthens; and should we find nothing of that Nature when we come to die, to be sure there would be no Body to laugh at us.

They represent God as infinitely merciful to wretched Men, and willing to accept of those that repent and turn, and sincerely fear him, and to make them everlastingly happy; and yet that Men may not presume, and turn the Grace of God into Wantonness, they represent him Just withal, that will take Vengeance on those who provoke his Patience, and mock his Compassion, and abuse his Mercy into Contempt of his Laws. They represent him as a very reasonable Master that lays upon his Servants no more than they are able to bear, and expects Returns answerable to the Favours he bestows on them; and such Services as are, in some measure, proportionable to the means he hath afforded them, which is no more but what we expect from our Servants. All which is highly rational; and I must needs imagine, since no Men that ever lived in the World could give the World such exact Rules for the Improvement and Advancement of a rational Soul as these Writers do, that they must have had some Divine Spirit to guide them, especially since the Education, Breeding and Conversion of some or most of them, gave them no Advantages of Learning or Philosophy, nor any Opportunity of improving their Intellectuals, by reading such Writings as acute and quick-sighted Men had dispersed thro' the World. To exalt
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the Soul, and to elevate it above Sense, and Earth, and Dross, and Dung, and to be admitted to familiarity with its Maker, seems to be the very Drift and Design of this Book; and if it were not Divine, or Inspired, it might however deserve the Reputation of maintaining the greatest and most generous Designs that ever were carried on by Mankind.

But sure its Original is more than Human; and the Persons who delivered these Things had certainly a Divine Commission. When I look either upon *Moses* and the Prophets in the *Old*, or upon *Jesus* and his Apostles in the *New Testament*, Men, who were the chief Promulgers of the Truths delivered in these Books, methinks there appears something extraordinary in them, and I cannot but see the Finger of God that did direct and help them: If I believe any Thing that I never heard or saw my self, I have the greatest Reason in the World to believe that *that Moses*, whom both *Jews* and *Heathens* call the great Leader and Captain-General of the *Jews*, was inspired from above when he gave his Law to the whole Nation of the *Jews*. That he wrought those stupendous Miracles which are recorded in Scripture, the *Jewish* Nation hath firmly and constantly believed ever since they were wrought; and how 600000 Men, before whom they were wrought, and who did feed upon many of those Wonders, and who have delivered the real Performance of those Miracles down to their Posterity, and so imprinted the Belief of it on the Hearts of their Progeny, that neither Sword, nor Fire, could
ever

ever make them deny it, even by the Testimony of their greatest Enemies; How, I say, this vast Multitude of Men could be mistaken in those Miracles, and give Credit to this Law, observe every Punctilio of it, undergo all that tedious Service he enjoined them, endure the Pain of Circumcision, neglect their secular and necessary Affairs to attend that laborious Worship, and all upon the Account of those Miracles, if they had not been confident of the Truth and Reality of them, is altogether unaccountable to a Rational Man. These miracles he could never have wrought without a supernatural Power; nor can I imagine any other Reason, why God should honour him with that supernatural Power, but only to confirm the Law and Statutes he gave to the *Jews*, and to testify unto them, and to assure them, that they came from God, and that the Punishments threatned would certainly attend the wilful Neglecters of that Law.

That the Prophets foretold Things, some 200, some 300, some 500 Years before they came to pass, is so evident from the History of *Josias*, *Cyrus*, and the *Messias*, who was to come, that he must profess himself a stranger to all History, that denies it; for I find the *Jews* had those Prophecies by them many Years before they were fulfilled, and therefore cannot be supposed to have forged those Prophecies, after the Things pretended to be foretold by them, were come to pass.

But had we no other Testimony, that the Writings of the *Old Testament* are inspired, and of Divine Original, but that of *Jesus*, and his Apostles (provided we can prove, That these

came

came with Divine Authority) there would be enough to satisfy any Person that doth not delight in disputing against Light and Reason.

That we owe the Doctrine of the *New Testament* to this *Jesus* and his Apostles, the whole Christian World hath unanimously believed for 1600 Years together; and I must needs suppose there could not have been such a stir in the World, for so many Centuries, about the Religion of *Jesus*, if there had not been such a Person in the World. But in this I find the whole World agree; That there was such a Person, not only *Christians*, but their greatest Enemies, both *Jews* and *Heathen*, do confess. This the prophanest Men alive will believe, as firmly at least as they do, that there were such Persons as *William* the Conqueror, or *Richard* the First, Second, Third, &c. This *Jesus*, as he doth aver and maintain, That God spake by *Moses* and the Prophets of old, so he could not but be himself a Person sent from God to reform the World, and to let them know the Will and Pleasure of the Almighty concerning their everlasting Happiness.

For I find, he wrought such Miracles, Works so exceeding Art and Nature, that they were the Wonder and Confusion of the World; Nor do I, upon Examination, perceive that the *Jews* deny it; only they give out, That being well skilled in the Art of Magick, and dealing with the Devil, he made all that stir and noise in the World, and drew so many Followers after him, which to any Man in his Wits seems the silliest Plea imaginable; for his Doctrine, Life, Miracles, all tended to the Destruction of the
Devil's

Devil's Kingdom. His first Work was to forbid Idolatry, and to pull down the Worship of Devils, and to encourage real Goodness, and Piety, and Abhorrency, not only of all Evil, but of all Appearance of Evil; and, *if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself, and how then shall his Kingdom stand?* Matth. 12. 26.

I find, that the Art of *Magick*, in those Days, was in great request with all the Grandees of the *Jews*, and they arrived to great Perfection in it. And if this *Jesus* wrought his Miracles by that Art, Why could not these great Masters of *Magick* imitate those wonderful Works? Not to mention, that at his Crucifixion, when they alledged all that Malice or Hell could suggest against him, none of his Adversaries, whatever some of them had done before, durst be so abominably impudent, as to charge him with that black and dismal Crime. Indeed his Design, Words, Actions, Behaviour, and Deportment, were all so directly contrary to this black and hellish Art, that a Man seems to be given up to the Devil that can have but the least Inclination to believe it. *Nero* certainly had the greatest Advantages of any Man that ever lived, to know the utmost reach of *Magick*; for as his extream Viciousness and Debauchery made him the Devil's Darling, so he had all the Magicians in the World to teach, and to instruct him: yet with all the Tricks and Juggles that either Men or Devils could furnish him withal, I do not find that he was able to cure a cut Finger.

As great an Enemy as *Julian* the Apostate was to the Christian Religion, as much as he hated

and persecuted it; yet, by what is recorded by very faithful Men, I see he could not deny but that *Jesus* did open the Eyes of some blind Men, and cured others that were lame, and dispossessed not few that were molested with evil Spirits; and tho' he makes light of these Wonders, yet to a Man that is not possessed with Prejudice, those Works will seem Divine and Supernatural; not but that Cataracts, and accidental Dimness of the Eyes, may be redressed by natural Means; but where Men, that are born blind, are restored to their sight with a Word, it cannot but argue a Commission from Heaven. Indeed, all that saw it, professed, they never saw it on this Fashion. There were Philosophers and Learned Men, as well as Tradesmen and Mechanicks, in the Crowd of his Hearers, who, could they have found but the least hole for evasion, would certainly have made use of it against him; but with the exactest Observations they could make, they could not make the least shadow of an Imposture, but were forced to confess that a mighty Prophet was risen up amongst them.

I cannot readily comprehend, why *Tiberius* should have been so fond, to have this *Jesus* ascribed into the number of the *Roman* gods; or why *Severus* should worship him in his Closet, among his other Deities; or why *Adrian* should have purposed to erect Temples, without Images, to his Honour, if they had not looked upon him as some extraordinary Person, and had not been sufficiently assured of the many wonderful Works he had done. I find, the Christians appeal to the publick Acts and Records among the very Heathens, where

where many of the wonderful Things that *Jesus* did were described, which they durst not have done, had they not been sure, that there were such publick Monuments, and those Things in them.

The Evangelists (whose Writings I have no more reason to question, than I do the Writings of *Tacitus*, or *Seneca*, or *Cicero*, or *Livy*, they having been universally acknowledged to be theirs, and no Man having ever been able to confute their Relation, or to give any satisfactory Argument why they should not be believed,) these Evangelists, some of them being Eye-witnesses, I perceive, make mention of several Miracles that were wrought before great multitudes of People, and certainly, some judicious Men then living would have found it out, if there had been a cheat or juggle in't : Nay is it rational, that the Apostles of this *Jesus* would, or durst, with that freedom, boldness and confidence, have affirmed, asserted, and abetted, both his Resurrection, and his Miracles, in the very Metropolis of *Judaea*, in the City of *Jerusalem*, where it had been an easie matter to discover the fraud, if there had been no such thing ? From all which I must necessarily conclude, as *Nicodemus*, John 3. 2. *Master, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no Man can do these Miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.*

Indeed, If I will not put a Veil over my Face, and wilfully blind my self, I must needs conclude, That this Doctrine must be Divine, whose Miracles were so ; nor can I suppose it possible, that God would suffer that Person, whom he in-

trusted with his own Power of doing Miracles, to obtrude upon the World false and idle Tales, or unnecessary and impertinent Doctrines, and Injunctions. I cannot conceive, why God should communicate to him the Power of doing Miracles, except it be to confirm the Divinity, and indispensable Necessity of his Doctrine and Precepts; so that if the Works he did had a Divine Original, his Doctrine and Commands must be derived from Heaven too; else it would follow, that God had been very unwise in his Choice, and had exerted his Omnipotent Power to little or no Purpose, only to make a shew in the World, or to increase the Kingdom of Darkness; than which, there can nothing be imagined more absurd, or incongruous. And tho' 'tis true, that most Religions boast of Miracles; and many Things which are cried up for Miracles are nothing less; yet these are so attested, that a Man must go against the strongest Evidence, that goes to contradict them.

If I consider the progress of this Gospel, I find 'tis altogether Miraculous, not only because the Apostles who propagated this Doctrine had the Power of Miracles conferred on them by this *Jesus*, which proves him to have been in the form of God; but because in less than 200 Years, without Force or Arms, in despite of Sword and Fire, and the direst Torments, it spread over all the known World. That the *Mahometan* Religion made a stupendious progress, after its Rise, is not denied; but he that shall reflect on the Means whereby it enlarged its Power, *viz.* by Sword and Violence, by depopulating Countries, by kill-

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ling and murdering all that resisted, will judge it rose from Hell, rather than it came down from Heaven. But I find the Gospel spread to a Prodigy, only by innocence and patience; by doing Good, and suffering Evil, the proper Arms of Heaven. No force was put upon Men, but what came from demonstration of the Spirit; and that 9000 Men, in 2 or 3 days time, should be captivated by it, is to me as great a Wonder, as *St. Peter's* bidding the lame Man take up his Bed and walk.

I see, how in dispute of all the Arms and Stratagems the Devil could invent to stop its Progress, in dispute of all the Endeavours of *Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Decius, Dioclesian*, to root it out, it mock'd their Rage and Fury. I find how the Blood of Martyrs, that was spilt this Day, brought forth a greater number of Confessors the next; and Multitudes of Christians, that were sacrificed this Week, were seconded by a greater Army in a few Days after, and Men seemed to glory in being designed for Death, and serving as Apprentices of Martyrdom; and tho' here and there a *Mahometan* may die for his Religion, yet such a Number of Martyrs no Religion can shew: And what can I think of so many Myriads of Men, that being offered Ease, Plenty, Riches, Honours, Preferments, despised them all, and would suffer the most exquisite Tortures, which the Executioners themselves trembled at, and which made the very Heathen blush, (so great was the Inhumanity,) rather than deny that Doctrine, which they had upon indubitable Testimonies received as Divine? What can I think, I say, of these Men, but that

they had sufficiently searched into the Truth of this Gospel; and were most certainly assured, that it was the Word and Will of God; and that *this Jesus* would most certainly fulfil his Promises to them, and give them eternal Life, if they could be content to lose their Lives on Earth for his Sake; That so many Hundred thousand Men, many of them Learned, and Wise, and of Noble Blood, and ingenious Education, should throw away their Lives in a Humour, without very good Ground that what they believed was really Divine, and could not be so, is a Thing so incredible, that those who can think so, discover themselves to be the most credulous Dunces in the World.

I read, how in and about *Christ's* Time, either just before his Coming, or shortly after his Departing out of this World, by Confession of the *Heathens* themselves (for *Porphyrius*, as bitter an Enemy as ever Christianity had among Philosophers, acknowledges so much) the *Heathen* Oracles, and the Voices of Devils, ceased. And can I think, the Devil would have left deluding the World, by his ambiguous Oracles, gone off of the stage voluntarily and quietly, except he had been forced and compelled to it by this prodigious Person, whom God sent into the World to reveal his Glory? Certainly it could not be one that was mere Man, whom these Evil Spirits would have veiled and bowed to; without he had been more than Man, they would have disputed their Power, and maintained their Possession, and defended their Universal Empire,
and

and made Men know, that the Arm of flesh was a very inconsiderable Weapon to controul, or dethrone *the Rulers of the Darknes of this World*, and scorned to give such a cowardly Oracle, as he did to *Augustus Cæsar*; *Me Puer Hebræus*, &c.
 “ The *Hebrew Boy* doth drive me out, and
 “ commands me Silence.

I find, where-ever this Gospel came, the Devil fled away; this destroyed his Service, Priests, and Altars, and the Gates of Hell could not withstand it; nor can I see which Way the Gospel could have effected all this, without its Power and Efficacy had been Divine.

I read, what strange Alterations it made upon all Peoples Tempers, Dispositions, and Affections, who embraced it; what should make so many great Men, so many subtil Philosophers, so many learned Men, so many Sages, Men of the greatest Wit, and Judgment, and Apprehension, both in the Eastern and Western Empire, yield and submit to it, and throw away their vain Philosophical Learning, and humble themselves to the Cross of *Christ*, except they had seen the Stamp of God upon it? I find, that the greatest Orators, and Logicians, and the ablest Disputants, that came with an intent to deride it, were captivated, and conquered by it, and submitted to its Laws and Doctrines; and as unlearned, and unskilful, as the Men were that defended it against their Subtilty, yet they were forced to yield to them; and to cry out, That they were overcome, and baffled. The Change it wrought upon Peoples Spirits, was wondrous strange; the Cholerick, the Envious, the

Drunkard, the Fornicator, the Adulterer, the Worldling, the Oppressor, the Timorous, the Pusillanimous, were in a sudden transformed into Love, Meekness, Sobriety, Chastity, Temperance, Charity, Liberality, Fortitude, and Magnanimity; and they that before trembled at the Thoughts of Fire and wild Beasts, offered themselves to Flames, and took it ill, if they were put by, and deprived of the Honour of Riding in such *Fiery Chariots* to Heaven.

Nay, I see at this Day, how wonderfully it works on the Souls of Men, makes them act against their natural Inclinations, without any prospect of temporal Interest, go against the Biases of their Corruptions, and stop in their Career to Hell; which they were running to with most eager appetite. I see how it makes them hate that evil Company they formerly delighted in, and how insipid it renders all the Jest of their old Associates; how it makes them love their Enemies, do good to them that hate them, pray for them that persecute them, and despitefully use them; how it makes them live above Sense, and seek their greatest Satisfaction in the Ways and Ordinances of God. In a Word, how from Beasts it changes them into Men; and from Men into more than Men. And what can I ascribe all this to, but to a Divine Spirit, that by his Gospel subdues the Hearts, and brings the Lusts and Affections of Men into Obedience to Christ Jesus: And tho' there be Religious Men among other Sects, as *Jews*, *Heathens* and *Mahometans*, yet is their Piety rather outward than inward; and whatever shew they may make of Self-denials

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and Mortifications, their Hearts are not changed all the While by force of their Doctrines, which yet we see daily practised in our Christian Congregations, whereof none can give so good an Account as Divines that discourse People about their Spiritual Concerns.

He that shall take such Arguments as these into serious Consideration, may easily satisfy himself, that in these Volumes is contained the true Will of God; at least, that this, of all Things extant, is most likely to be the Will of God, nothing in Nature having those Circumstances, and Characters, and Testimonies of a Divine Original, as the Rules contained in these Books we call the *Bible* have; and whatever seeming Contradictions and Tautologies may be found there, to a considerate Man it would appear, that as long as the main Thing, the true Way to Happiness, is secured, such accidental Things, as Frequency of the same Expressions, and Chronological Mistakes, committed by the various Transcribers, may be passed by without Offence: That many Things which have seem'd Contradictions, upon examination of the Customs and Circumstances of the Age these Books were written in, have been found no Contradictions; and that thus it may be in all the rest, if we knew all those Ways of speaking and reckoning, and naming Things, and all the proverbial Expressions then in use; That in the substantial Things of these Books there hath been no Alteration or Corruption, for so many Ages together; and that the plain Way of writing used here, and repeating the same Things often, doth but argue honest Sim-

Simplicity, and want of Guile, and Unwillingness, to impose upon the World in those that have written those Books; and that though some Passages recorded in them seem to us superfluous, and needless, as that of *Jacob*, and *Rachel*, and *Leah*, yet the sacred Writer might have peculiar and very weighty Reasons for it, and design it as an Allegory, to represent some other Mystery, as we see St. *Paul* affirms of *Abraham*, and *Sarah*, and *Hagar*, Gal. 4. 24.

And as Consideration would chase away Infidelity of this Nature, so the want of it, we find, makes Men Sots and Beasts, and talk against Things they understand not, and cavil at Things most Sacred, and full of Reason, and Majesty. This is it makes them break Jest on that which they ought to bow to, and speak lightly of those Mysteries which require and challenge their greatest Veneration.

This, 2dly, is the Reason which makes the sensual Man question another World. He considers not what a Divine Angelical Spirit is within him, nor how improbable it is that the Rational Part of himself (a Thing certainly distinct from his Body, and which consists not of Matter capable of Corruption, and can voluntarily move itself, and think, which Matter cannot do) should perish as the Beasts of the Field, would he but consider how this Notion of an After-retribution is spread all the soberer World over; and tho' all do not agree in the Manner of the Souls surviving, some being for Transmigration, as *Pythagoras*, and the *Brackmanes* in

in the *Indies*; others, for its acting in an airy Vehicle during the state of Separation; yet most agree in this, whatever doubtful Expressions might drop from *Socrates*, *Seneca*, and others, That 'tis sensible either of God's Love, or heavy Displeasure, and its Nature immortal: And certainly this Notion must have a Beginning; something or other did occasion it in Mens Minds; The usual Plea, that Politicians did invent it to restrain Men from secret Villanies which they saw present Punishments would not do, seems to be strangely impertinent; for not to mention that there was never any History in the World that we could hear of, that gave us an account of such a Thing, or of the Beginning of it, we cannot suppose that these Politicians, if they were wise Men, and expected to see the Fruit of their Labours, would ever have adventured to plant this Notion of a future Judgment in Mens Understandings, had not they either believed, and been persuaded that there was a possibility of such an After-retribution, and that the Notion was very suitable and agreeable to Man's Reason; or observed, that there was in most Men a very great Inclination to believe it, else they might as well have persuaded the World that Black is White, or that 'tis better to be blind than to see; Maxims, which would have exposed them to Scorn and Contempt. And whence should this Suitableness of the Notion to Man's Reason, or that easie closing of the Soul with the Notion, or Mens Readiness to embrace the Notion upon the first Hearing of it, come?

come? Whence can all this be, but from the stamp and impressi^on the great Creator hath made on the Hearts of Men, when first he gave them a Being in the World? Nor can we think so mean of this first Cause, as to suppose that he made this Notion so suitable to the rational Soul of Man, or endued the Souls of Men with a Proneness to entertain it, without there had been really such a Thing as a future Retribution; else it would follow, That this Supreme Being had given us a Proneness to believe a Lye, or a Thing which is not, and consequently imposed and put a Cheat upon his Creatures, which is equally absurd and blasphemous.

Nor could melancholy Men be the first Broachers of it, as is pretended by some; for we do not find that melancholy Fancies do ordinarily spread so much. Should a melancholick Man fancy a Country where Men go upon their Heads, and write a very large Book concerning the Situation, Nature, Temperature, Manners, and Customs of it, who would give Credit to his Description? He that fancies he sees such and such Things in the Air, or in his House, or entertains Notions that are out of the common Road, gets but very few to imitate or to follow him, or to think as he doth. But this Belief of an After-retribution takes Possession of the greatest and learnedest Men, nay, the most airy Constitutions embrace it, Men of all Complexions and Tempers imbibe and cherish it, and they cannot stand out against the Notion, it appears so reasonable; so that still we must have

have Recourse to him that first made Man, and made this Notion so agreeable to his Reason; and this he would not, could not have done, if such a Thing had never been intended; tho' Apparitions, Ghosts, and Spectres, are laugh'd at by some as Dreams and Gulleries, yet that doth not controul the Experience of judicious and unbiassed Men in all Ages, who have both seen and spoken with those Inhabitants of the other World, and received from thence very dreadful accounts of its Retributions.

Would the sensual Wretch but ruminate upon these Circumstances, the Consideration would confound his foolish Principles, and childish Conclusions; would he but take Time to consider how hard a Matter it is to eradicate this Notion out of the Mind after it has once taken Root there, what pains some daring Men are forced to use to lift or eject this Principle out of their Souls; how they are forced to drink and swear to be rid of it; how they must turn Beasts to unman themselves; turn Day into Night, and Night into Day; caress all sorts of Temptations; make themselves slaves to their Lusts; court the vilest of Mankind; seek out jovial Society; run thro' a perfect Discipline of Vice; are afraid to be alone; are ever in a hurry; dare not make use of their Reason; are forced to banish all serious Thoughts; are constrained to entertain all that's light and frothy; encourage themselves in nothing but Sensuality; avoid all sober and grave Discourses; be always in the Noise of Drums and Trumpets, I mean in the Noise of idle Tales and Diversions; damp
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all the Checks of their own Consciences; read Plays and Romances; and busie themselves about nothing but Trifles, Things that School-Boys would be ashamed of, and all this to root out this one poor Notion of an After-judgment; and yet when they have done all this, debauched their virtuous Principles, ruined Nature, dethroned their Reason, made themselves greater Slaves to the Devil, possibly, than the Devil would have them to be; they cannot totally banish it, it will come again and fright them; and the Notion sticks so close, is so rivetted into the Soul, that neither the Blood of the Grapes, nor all the Frolicks and Merriments they can think of, nor all the Mistresses and Strumpets in the World can totally blot out and deface it.

Would he but consider all this, an easie Matter would make him conclude, if there be no such Thing, and nothing but Education produces and causes those needless Apprehensions of an After-Judgment, then why is it so hard a Matter to eradicate this Nothing? 'Tis true, Superstition is as hard to get out of the Bones as this Notion; but since it is for this Notions sake that Men embrace Superstition, the Question may lawfully be asked. One would think, if it stands for a Cypher only, it should be no hard Matter to unravel Education; for a Vice, I see, tho' it become a second Nature, may be unlearn't by Degrees; but this Notion of an After-Judgment, tho' the Sinner may suppress and smother it for some Time, yet that it should break out again, and when the Wretch thinks he hath conquered it, should

should return with greater Violence, nay, beat so much stronger upon the Mind, by how much more a Man strives to put it out, as if it would not be denied, and would have Admittance in despite of all Opposition, and mocked all the Weapons that Nature, and the Wit of Man, can use against it: This sure makes it more than probable, that it is a Plant which God himself hath planted in the Soul.

Richard the Third cared for Religion as little as any Man in the World could do; nay, his Murders, Bloodsheds, Wrongs, Injuries he did, and which were so familiar to him, shew he neither believed another World, nor dreaded it; yet the Night before *Bosworth Field* Fight, he dream'd that all the Devils in Hell were gnawing and tearing of him; which did not a little discompose him when he awaked. Indeed, saith the Historian, This was not so much a Dream, as an evil Conscience, which foreboded an All-revenging Arm, as soon as his Soul should enter into the Region of Spirits.

Would the Sinner consider with himself, I believe there is a God, and I cannot but allow *that* God impartial Justice: To deny him this, is to deny him Perfection, and consequently to deny his Being; for the Notion of God implies absolute Perfection: If this God be Just, how shall I judge of his Justice? I have no other Rule, to go by, but that Justice, which all Mankind believes to be Justice. If God be our Governor, (as certainly none hath a greater Right to it, because in him we live, and breathe, and have our Being)

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he cannot but be a righteous Governor; and how can he be a righteous Governor, without distributive Justice, without making a just difference by Rewards and Punishments between the Obedient and Disobedient? And when I see God makes no just difference in this Life by Rewards and Punishments, between those that serve him, and those that despise and contemn his Will; What can I conclude, but that he intends to make it in the Life to come, or after this Life is ended? Which Way he intends to do it, though it is not material for me to know, yet finding my Soul capable of Joy and Misery here, of Peace and Anguish, I can easily conceive that this Soul I carry with me, will be the principal Subject of the Joys or Miseries hereafter. He is most certainly able to preserve that Soul, which he hath made capable of being governed by Moral Laws and Precepts, and to be wrought upon by Moral Perswasions into Obedience to his Laws: He is most certainly able, I say, to keep our Souls in Being, even when they leave the Earthly Tabernacle of their Bodies, and to punish or reward them according to their Works; these Souls being the principal Agents in Good or Evil. And he that was able to create the Body, is certainly able to raise it again and unite it to the Soul, that so both may participate of the same Fate. Nay, the necessity of these After-rewards and Punishments enforce a Necessity, at least, of God's preserving the Soul for these Rewards and Punishments; and what Way soever God hath to preserve our Intellectual Part after
Death,

Death, 'tis enough to me, or to any rational Man, that according to the Notion and Apprehension we have of Justice, he cannot be Just, without he doth preserve it, either for Reward, or Punishment.

For, that God doth not sufficiently reward and punish Men in this Life, daily Experience gives sufficient Testimonies. The wickedest of Men, are, very often, the greatest in the World; and those that oppress such as truly fear God, swim in all Manner of Plenty and Ease, and Riches and Honour. And tho' it is true, that such Men have Sicknes, and die, yet those are Things common to Good and Bad, and can be thought no just differencing Retributions. Those that make it their Business to observe God's Laws, labour to approve themselves his most obedient Subjects, and his most faithful Servants, ordinarily suffer great Injuries, are unjustly arraigned, condemned, executed; undergo tortures of cruel Mockings, of Scourgings, of Bonds, of Imprisonments; witness the Saints of the Three first Centuries; who with all their strictness and circumspect walking with God, got nothing visibly, but Gibbets, and Gallows, and Racks, and Wheels, and Flames, and Tortures, and Dungeons: And their Accusers, or Judge, may be, have all that Heart can wish; their Eyes stand out with Fatness, neither are they plagued like other Men; or if they be sometimes afflicted, the Affliction is not at all answerable to the Horridness of the Crimes they commit.

How gently do many of these Monsters die upon their Beds, no Lamp expires more leisurely than their Breath; while the other, that meditates in God's Law Day and Night, dies with Disgrace and Shame, or is most barbarously murdered, and butchered. Can I look upon all these Passages and Occurrences, and not conclude another World? I must either conclude, there is no Governor of the World, or if there be one, that Governor will certainly find a Time, if not here, yet hereafter, to manifest his Justice, to reward the Innocent, and to punish those that bid defiance to Heaven. It was therefore rationally said of *Frederick* the Emperor, hearing that a Nobleman in one of his Provinces, a Man who had denied himself nothing that his sensual Appetite did crave, lived all his time, so far as his Nature was able to bear it, in Gluttony, Drunkenness, Fornication, Adultery, Oppression, Injustice, and had committed several Murders too, and had never been sick, and died at last, after 95 Years Abode in the World, of mere old Age, quietly, softly, without any Pain, or Disturbance, That either there must be no God, or there must be another World, where this licentious Wretch must be punished.

Either Man is a nobler Creature than a Beast, or he is not; if he be not, what means his Reason, his Speech, his Power, to express his Mind, and to examine the Nature, Manner, Ends, Causes, and Designs of all Things, his Dominion over all the Beasts of the Earth, &c. If he be, we must not affirm that of him, which will certainly declare him more miserable than the Beasts, whose

whose Spirits go downwards. If there be no other World, no Judgment to come, no after-retribution, why is Man possessed with the fear of it? This Fear is a thing of that consequence, and hath so great an Influence upon Mens lives, that from that fear, according as Creatures are either possessed with it, or want it, they may justly be called either happy or miserable. Beasts, I see, are not capable of these Fears, and consequently cannot be disturbed with the Apprehension of some Things, and therefore must necessarily be more happy and nobler Creatures than Men, who are not only capable of such Apprehensions, but, by a natural Instinct, feed and cherish such Thoughts as these.

And can there be any Thing more absurd, than to call an Ox, or Lion, or Elephant, a nobler Creature than Man? And yet this must necessarily follow, if there be no other World. Man would be the most miserable Creature in the World, being so apt to be tormented with those Fears, if he did die into Annihilation: And he might justly wish himself a Beast, and lament that God had put such a Clog to all his Delights and Merriments, and accuse his Maker of Injustice, or Cruelty, for frightening, or possessing him with fears of that which never was, nor is, nor will be.

Such Considerations, and pausing upon the point in cool Blood, would most certainly satisfy any rational, impartial Man, and deliver him from halting between two Opinions, and convince him, that he doth not cease to *be* when he dies; that there is a just Judge; that he will in a

short time find it by woeful Experience, if a serious return to God prevent it not, and that when the jolly Sinner banishes all Thoughts and Contemplations of this Nature from his Mind, he turns Monster, challenging Devils, yea worse than Devils, for the Devils believe a World to come, and tremble; and it is merely want of Consideration makes him so.

3. The same Defect makes him wonder at the Malapertness and Impertinence of Divines, that, in every Sermon almost, pronounce Eternal Flames to be a due and just punishment for Temporal Sins.

Let the vain Man but call his Thoughts together, and summon his Understanding, to take a View of such Topicks as these. Why should I think it incongruous to God's Justice, to punish Sins committed here, with an Eternity of Pain and Anguish? Hath not he Power to do with his own what he pleaseth? May not he affright stubborn Sinners with what Punishment he hath a mind to? It is not every Infirmary, every accidental Error, every Ignorance, every little Fault that this Eternity of Anguish is threatned to, but a wilful Ignorance, customary Sinning, stubborn Disobedience, habitual Rebellion. Had a Servant to whom I were as kind as to my own Child, whom I had raised out of the Dust, and heaped innumerable Favours upon, and promised all my Estate to, after some few Years Service; and should that Servant, instead of Honouring of me, Despise me wherever he comes; instead of Obeying me, Laugh at my reasonable Commands; instead of

Work-

Working, play his Time away; instead of going to the Place I send him to, run to Brothel-houses or Taverns; instead of Loving me, Hate me, and Affront me, slight both my actual Kindnesses, and my future Smiles; and notwithstanding my continual Exhortations to another Course of Life, continue wilfully in the Way he hath begun, merely to gratifie his foolish Lusts; and when he is convinced too of the Unreasonableness of his Doings, knows it is Ingratitude in the highest Degree, and yet will be guilty of it; and when he might do otherwise, only out of Malice, and to vindicate his own Humour, resolves against it; What Punishment can there be too great for such a Wretch?

Were this mine, or my Neighbour's Case, we should certainly doom such a Monster to all the Tortures that Severity can invent, or inflict; and why should I have any hard Thoughts of God, for punishing the Sinners ingratitude with Eternal pain or loss, an ingratitude so great, all Things considered, that the worst Returns one Man can make to another, cannot sufficiently express the horror and vileness of it; and tho' God ought to be looked upon as a Being of infinite Love and Benignity to his Creatures, yet, what a Monster doth he make himself, that throws Dirt upon infinite Beauty and Excellency?

God, for ought I see, in condemning wilful Sinners to eternal Misery, gives them but their own Choice; and if that old Saying be true, *Volenti non fit injuria*; *To him that's willing, can be done no Injury*; God certainly cannot be ac-

cused of Cruelty, for he gives the stubborn Sinner but that, which he did deliberately pitch upon, and affected; and tho' no Man doth ordinarily chuse Punishment, much less everlasting Calamity, for its own self, yet as long as they do with vehement Affection long after that, which hath this Calamity inseparably annexed, we justly suppose, that they agree to suffer that Calamity, as well as to enjoy the Thing, which is the others inseparable Companion. He that is certain, that the smell of such an Herb, or Flower, is poisonous, and will kill him; if notwithstanding this Conviction, he will smell to it; 'tis apparent that he makes Choice of his Death and Ruin; and tho' it may be replied, That while the Sinner doth so he is no better than distracted; and who will punish a Mad-man for affronting him? Yet it is such a Madness, as he may easily cure himself of, if he be not unwilling; and the Madness is the more inexcusable, because Reason is wilfully turned out of Doors, and he rather feigns himself mad, than is so.

There is not a Sinner, that lives under the Gospel, but he must know, that he who doth not practically believe the Gospel, or, which is all one, lives in wilful contempt of the Laws of the Gospel, shall certainly be damned; for the Gospel is so full of these Threatnings, that he that doth but come to any Place, where this Word of Life is preached, if he be not deaf, must necessarily hear it; nay, if he will but make the least enquiry, and set himself to consider seriously, whether that Gospel be of God or no, he cannot but find, that it is the Son of God,
even

even he, who can asſoon loſe his Being, as tell a Lye, that hath, with all the Proteſtations imaginable, threatned this everlaſting Condemnation, to Men, that are reſolved to prefer Satisfaction of their Luſts, before all his wiſeſt and wholeſome Precepts.

This being known by all that have any Reaſon or Underſtanding, as much as that *Felony*, or *Burglary*, is Death by the *Law*, if in deſpight of this Knowledge, and Perſwaſion, and the hard-hearted Wretch will venture upon a Life of Diſobedience and Contempt, to which Damnation is inſeparably annexed; and rather than leave off, will make God contradict himſelf, act contrary to his Threatnings, falſifie his Word, as if he intended not to do what he ſaith: What can I think, but that the vain Man is in love with his own Eternal Deſtruction?

In love with it? So one would think, that ſees him drive to everlaſting Death, as furiously as *Jehu* did to *Jezreel*, and make more haſte to invade the Gates of Hell, than *Elijah*, for all his fiery Chariot, did, to get to Heaven. The Man that runs through Swords and Daggers, breaks down Walls and Fences, poiſons the Principles of Sobriety Providence hath lodged in his Breſt, ſtrangles the kind Suggeſtions of his own Conſcience, cracks the Bolts and Bars of a virtuous Education, ſeeks out Dangers, and precipitates himſelf into them, and with the noiſe of his Riot, ſtrives to overcome the Calls of the Holy Ghoſt within; deſies all preſent Conviſions; diſregards the Groans, and Cries, and Tears, and Wounds of a crucified Saviour,

that would keep him from being undone; vanquishes God's Methods to catch him into Repentance; breaks through all the Prohibitions of the Gospel, through Vows, and Promises, and Sacraments, and most solemn Engagements: Charges all the Threatnings of a jealous God, and fights his Way through Rocks of Oppositions, and all to get to Hell and Damnation, sure makes that his Choice; and if so, God doth him no Injury in giving him his own Hearts Desire.

A sheep, or a horse, certainly can never counterballance the Life of a Man; how should it, when Man is worth more than a World, and all things are put under his Feet, all Sheep and Oxen, and the Beasts of the Field, the Fowls of the Air, and the Fish of the Sea, and whatsoever passes through the Paths of the Sea? Yet he that knows he shall be hanged if he steal either, and will, in despite of the Penalty, venture merely to gratifie his sickly Fancy, justly suffers the Punishment, which seems to bear no Proportion with the Things he stole; the Justice of the Punishment is founded in the Malefactor's Choice, and so we find it in the case before us; the Blessing and the Curse is laid before the sensual Man, Life and Death are proposed to him, he's put to his Choice, which of these he'll have: He freely and wilfully chuses Death and the Curses, maugre all that God, or his Angels, or his Ministers, can say to the contrary; and it is but just, since he thus fights against God, and seems resolved to cross all God's Endeavours to purifie and turn him, and will have
his

his Wrath and Indignation, and scorns his Mercy; God should let him have that Fire and Brimstone, which is the Portion of the Sinner's Cup, and which he is so very greedy after, as if he were afraid he should never be so happy, as to obtain or be Master of it.

Indeed, the more I think of it, the more I find, that it is not God so much that condemns him to Eternal Misery, as the Sinner himself. 'Tis he that's thus barbarous to his own Soul, and adjudges himself to that Worm which dies not. He kisses that *consuming Fire*, as if it were the *Light of God's Countenance*, and seems to envy the Devils their Happiness, he doth so long to be a sharer of it. He *snatches* Damnation out of the Hands of God's Justice, and while God offers to keep it from him, makes a long Arm to reach it.

God, alas! doth do what he can to save him, his Bowels yearn over him, and nothing would please him more than to see his penitential Tears. He is ready, with the good Father, *Luke 15. 20.* to run, and to have compassion on him, as soon as he doth but resolve to leave the Kingdom of Darkness; even that God, who would have all Men to be saved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth: He waits to be gracious, and justly expects that the Vineyard, on which he hath bestowed great cost and pains, should bring forth Grapes. He doth not afflict the Children of Men willingly, he delights not in their Tortures. He deborts and discourages them from being accessory to their own Ruin. He professes, that in all their Affliction he is afflicted; and that when he
doth

doth afflict them, it is because there is no likely way besides to bring them to a sense of their Duty. He gives them time and space to repent; he cares for them with his Heaven; he can do no less in Justice, than to cast them into Hell for the stubborn Offender; this is the only way to vindicate the Honour of his Name, and then he would have him than that *Light*, and walk in the way that leads to Life, and permits him to rejoice over his Repentance, and to crown his serious Endeavours with all that is true and glorious. All the Mercies, Afflictions, Judgments, Providences he sends upon him, are to dissuade him from walking in the Way to Destruction; he wooes the proud Creature to his dying Day, and stands between him and eternal Anguish, while the Wretch saucily thrusts the eternal God away, and will storm the fatal Gate; God would hold him, but he breaks loose from him, and flings himself into the Devil's Arms; and then, sure it is not God so much that condemns him to everlasting Horrour and Anguish, as himself.

But if it were not so, that there is such a Punishment threatned in the Gospel, is beyond dispute. All the Evangelists, all the Apostles of our Lord, and what is more, our Lord himself spake of it, and knowing the Terrors of the Lord, they warn every Man. And his Threatning, to be sure, is not like the Ceremonial Law, which was but a shadow of Things to come, and so fell of itself, when the substance appear'd. In this Threatning there are no Types, and therefore we can look for no Abolition; this is God's peremptory determination, this Way he is unalterably resolv'd to pro-

proceed; and most certainly God is not a Man that he should lie, or the Son of Man that he should repent; His Word is engaged, and the Honour of his Veracity concerned, to see this Threatning executed; should God dispense with it, it would follow, that God either did not know what he did when he made this Sanction, or that he repents of it as unjust, or that he did not foresee the Inconveniences which were like to ensue upon the Execution of this Threatning; all which Consequences are monstrously absurd and unreasonable.

The Terms and Conditions upon which eternal Salvation is so offered, are so reasonable, and so just, and, I may say, so easie, that the wilful Neglect of them deserves no less, than Loss of the great Salvation God offers; easie they are, most certainly, compared with the laborious Service of the Devil; easie to him that is experimentally acquainted with the Love of God, and hath tasted the Sweetness of Communion with God; easie to him that through long Practice hath made them natural to himself, made them part of his Temper, and rivetted them into his very Inclinations: Were the Conditions God requires, in order to everlasting Bliss, attended with unconquerable Difficulties; did God require a thousand Rivers of Oil, or the Sacrifice of our First-born, or dragging the Cattle upon a Thousand Hills to his Altar; did he require us to wade thro' stinking Ditches full of Leeches and venomous Creatures, as the Enemy of Mankind is said to advise some of the *Indians*; did he enjoin us to
suffer

suffer our selves to be crushed to Death under Chariot Wheels, as some of the Heathens of *Indostan* do, out of Respect to their Idol *Jaganath*; indeed then, to neglect this promised Felicity would admit of some Excuse, the Difficulty of the Enterprize would qualifie the Crime, and the Omission be capable of some slight Apology.

But when God requires no more than a practical Belief and Submission to those Rules, his Son came down from Heaven to teach us, the Observance whereof advances our Temporal Interest, as well as our Spiritual; keeps us in health, and in good temper; makes us live quietly, and contentedly, even in this present World, where the Duty is Profit, and Obedience brings its present Reward with it, there to slight an incorruptible Crown of Glory, common Reason will tell us that we justly lose it. He that will not accept of the greatest Treasure imaginable, if he may have it but for asking, we our selves confess 'tis Pity he should ever enjoy it; and then when nothing but good Manners are required, no Death but that of our Extravagancies; no slaying of Beasts, except it be our Lusts; no Offering, but the Calves of our Lips; no Sacrifice but that of Prayer and Thanksgiving, and Self-resignation is all the Trouble God desires us to be at in order to endless Felicity: The Condition being so facile, so equitable, we cannot, if we our selves were to be the Judges, but acknowledge that we deserve never to possess it, if we despise or neglect so reasonable a Condition.

The high quality of the Person offended, certainly makes a Fault the greater; he that kills a King commits a greater Crime than he that kills a Peasant; and if the Dignity of the Person injured aggravates the Sin, it may justly aggravate the Guilt and Punishment too. And therefore he that hath affronted his Prince and Sovereign deserves to live in Goal longer than he that hath wronged his Equal or Inferior; and consequently he that offends, and wilfully without need, and maliciously, and for many Years, and in despite of all the Courtship of God's Ministers to leave off, offends an Infinite, Eternal, Incomprehensible God: Why should not the Offence amount to a demerit of Infinite and Eternal Punishments? Certain it is, that the obstinate Sinner slights an Eternal Redemption; and had he lived for ever, he would, with all peradventure, have sinned for ever; and since the Man that would have committed Treason is deservedly executed for Treason, why should not he suffer Eternally, who, if he had lived here to all Eternity, would have affronted God, and abused him to all Eternity? The more I reflect on the Nature of Sin, the more dreadful it appears to me. Behold with a careless Eye it appears to be only an Infirmary of Nature, a slight Wound of the Soul, a small Crack in that transparent Glass: But taking a view of its Boldness, Sawciness and Insolence, I find how it threatens Heaven: If I think of God's Wisdom, I see how Sin controuls that, as if God had made very foolish Laws to govern Mankind by: If I ruminate on God's Power, I see how Sin mocks that as if all his Threat-

Threatnings were but Bugbears, and God did threaten more than he could perform: If I cast my Eye upon God's truth and veracity, I see how Sin would make him a Liar, changeable, unfaithful, inconstant to himself: If I take a View of his Justice, I see how Sin would dash and abolish it; for in that it makes the Sinner hope for impunity, when he hath affronted his Maker as much as he can, what doth it but enervate God's Righteousness, shake off God's Government, and prompt the Sinner to resist, and fight with him whose Eyes are like flames of Fire, and whose Feet are as Brass glowing in a Furnace; and that such a continual Contempt of the Almighty should justly and deservedly pull down perpetual torments, is a thing not at all contrary to reason: Nay, for ought I see, the Sinner makes nothing of eternal Damnation while he lives here; the Loss of 50 or 100 £ shall fright him more than everlasting Banishment from the gracious Presence of Almighty God, whereby he tacitly confesses, that the Punishment is very slight and inconsiderable; and what wrong doth God do him, in inflicting a Punishment upon him, which, by his own Acknowledgment, is so trivial, and so slight, that he'll sooner endure it than the Loss of a Friend or Relation; nay, many times wishes for it in his common Discourse, as if it were some Pleasure to see eternal Flames about his Ears; and tho' this may be called Inadvertancy, yet it is such an Inadvertancy as will make the Sinner blush one Day, and clear the Almighty, who inflicts no more upon him than a Flea-bite, for it seems he makes no more of it, either in his Thought or Expressions.

How

How soon would Consideration of such Arguments as these undeceive the worldly Wretch, that talks he knows not what, when he finds fault with God's dooming careless, wilful, obstinate Sinners to unquenchable Fire? But 'tis want of Consideration makes his Discourse so loose and wanton. 'Tis this makes him embrace every little Conjecture about the shortness of Hell Torments, before the solid Arguments, that evince an Eternity of God's Displeasure against stubborn Sinners: 'Tis this makes him prefer a May-be before a Real known Truth; and the Man that makes Sport with Eternal Misery shall be more acceptable Company to him than the gravest and most judicious Divine, whose Reasons he cannot answer.

Alas! Did the Drunkard, when he comes to himself again, finite upon his Thigh, and say, What have I done? How odious is this Vice I indulge my self in? How like a Beast do I live? How unworthy of that Reason which the wise Creator hath bestowed upon me? How unworthy of those Mercies I daily enjoy? How would many of the sober Heathens have scorned a Temptation to such a Sin? What a strange Creature would such a Man as *Zeno*, the Heathen Philosopher, have taken me to be, had he seen me so disordered, who reprov'd *Antigonus* so sharply for this Excess? What Follies and Extravagancies doth it involve me in? How do I prostitute and expose my self to the Contempt and Scorn of Men that know me? How can I hear the A-

-bottle

possible protest, that no Drunkard shall enter into the Kingdom of God, and go on! Will not God take an Account one Day, and examine how I have spent my Time; and can I spend it worse than by exceeding irrational Creatures in sensuality? What Brute but a Swine would disorder itself, as I do in my Body? What can I plead in excuse of so foul a Crime? Shall I plead Natural Inclination, when nothing is a greater Disgrace to my Nature than this Sin? Shall I say, I am tempted to it, when my yielding to the Temptation argues the greater Weakness and Pusillanimity? Shall I pretend Custom, when I cannot look upon the Picture of a drunken Man without Detestation? And can I act that Folly which I cannot but abhor in Portraiture? How ridiculous does even my drunken Companion seem to me, if either sickness, or some other Accident, hath for a certain Time kept me sober? To see a Creature endow'd with a Soul, which Devils envy, transformed into a strange Spectacle, a Mad-man, rather than a Christian; his Face pale, his Eyes swelled, his Body reeling, his Mouth railing, flandering and abusing both God and his Neighbour; his Resolutions desperate, his Intentions evil, his sensual Appetite lawless and ungovernable, his Desires lascivious and unclean, his Actions disorderly, &c. To see so dismal a Sight, makes me admire, when my Reason is clear, how 'tis possible for Men to be so wicked and foolish, and yet do I wilfully fall into that, the Odiousness whereof moves my Anger, and my Wonder? How far greater is the
Glory

Glory of the *Rechabites* than of the *Sodomites*? And had not I better be commended with the abstemious *Demosthenes*, *Diocles*, *Poleman*, and the *Carthaginians* of old, than reproached with the loose and intemperate *Anacreon*, *Melancthon*, *Heracledes*, *Tiberius*, and such Monsters of Mankind, who valued themselves upon their excessive Draughts, and rejoiced in Drink more than in the most virtuous Qualifications? Is this renouncing the Devil and all his Works, as I vowed to do in Baptism? Is this adorning the Gospel of my Saviour, as my Profession requires? If I fear not Hell-fire, Why do not I fear impoverishing of my self and Family? How do I dispose my self for all Manner of Sin, by this Enormity? What Crime is there that I am not fit for, when my Reason is overwhelmed with Drink? How do I imbezzel the Gifts of God, when I abuse his Creatures thus? How do I pervert the end of God's Bounty, when I make that to ruin and destroy my Nature, which was intended to preserve it? What Difficulty is there in leaving so gross a Vice, which threatens so much Mischief and Misery? Need People be exhorted to provide for their own Safety? Need they Advice or Council to do good to themselves? Is it such a Pleasure to make a Pond of my Body? Is it such a pleasure, to be laughed at by all Men that maintain Sobriety? What hurt hath God ever done me, that I should thus wilfully affront him? How soon might I vanquish this sin, if I would in good earnest resolve to be allured by my old Companions no more? And why should they be dearer to me, than my God, my Soul, and a good Con-

science? Will these Companions save me, when I come to die? Will it not be far more comfortable to have none of this Load to burthen and oppress my Soul? What if God should strike me dead in a drunken fit? Doth not *Dives* his calling for a Drop of Water to cool his burning Tongue affright me? How do I prepare for Dis-eases by this Vice? And if there were no Hell, no Judgment to come, how should the Disasters, which attend this Sin, discourage me? What if I should drop down in such a Posture, and awake in Hell? Lord! if neither the Plagues which wait upon the Offence in this World, nor the Terror of that which is to come, can dissuade me; how justly may God pour out all the Vials of his Wrath upon me? How justly may he plunge me into the *Red Sea* of his Indignation, and leave me to the Rage and Malice of the Devil, whose Voice and Suggestions I do now obey?

Did the Sot but blow those Sparks of Reason he hath left, into such Considerations as these, how horrid, how nauseous, would the Sin appear? But want of Consideration makes him transform the Image of God, into the Image of a Beast, and makes him drink away the Poor's Relief, and his own Estate: This makes him a Thief, for he robs the Poor, and sometimes his own Family, of that Sustenance and Support he owes them, as he is a Man, and pretends to be a Christian: This is it makes him laugh, when he should wish for Rivers of Tears, and for a Fountain of Water, to deplore the Sadness of his Condition here,
and

and the more dreadful State of his Soul hereafter.

Did the Swearer but seriously consider, what a foolish, weak, sordid, and impertinent Thing it is, to mingle Profanations of God's Name with his Speeches, he would soon take Pains to avoid it, and set a mulct upon himself for running upon the same Rock again. Would he but think, Good God! how irrationally do I act! If I believe there is a God, what can I fancy that God to be? Sure I must fancy him to be such a Deity as the Heathens worshipped, one deaf, and dumb, and blind; a Deity of Brass, or Stone, that I can securely play withal; a Deity that's not at all jealous of his Honour and Glory, and can sit down under every Affront that's put upon him; should the meanest of my Servants make use of my Name in every trifling Discourse, in every foolish Story, and whenever he is pettish or peevish, I should take it very ill at his Hands; and why should I think God will endure that from me, which I would not allow in my Foot-boy, or *Valet de Chambre*? I must confess there is no Bait, no Temptation to this Sin: He that robs upon the High-Way, is tempted by an apparent Profit: The Pirate hath a rich Prize in his Eye, the ship that comes laden with Spices from the *East*, with Silks from the *Levant*, with precious Drugs from the *Indies*, whets his Appetite; that the Covetous hugs his Gold, and pays Adoration to his Money, as to his Saint, *That he beholds the Sun when it shines, and the Moon walking in Brightness*, no Marvel, for he sees it hath a Kind of Almighty Power, can make Foes Friends, unlock Gates, break

the strongest Bars, give them admission into company of the highest Quality, &c. The Disssembler hopes he may save his Credit, and Reputation, and Fortune, by not speaking what he thinks; but in Swearing, I can have no prospect of Advantage, and I must only act the Devil, love sin for sin's sake; Fornication and Adultery do yet pretend some Pleasure, but this I cannot do in Swearing; the greatest Masters of Pleasure never reckon'd this Sin as an Ingredient of Carnal Satisfaction; and tho' there is no real Necessity for any Sin, yet for this I can pretend no Necessity at all; *Let them be ashamed*, saith the Prophet, *which transgress without Cause*, Psal. 25. 3. Not that any Man, who sins, hath a just Cause for sinning, but some sins, even in the Devil's Judgment, Men have no apparent Cause for them, for they sin without Temptation, and such a sin is Swearing: Were a Knife set to my Throat, were my Life in danger, were I to die presently upon the Spot, if I did not swear, I might have some Colour of Argument for it; but when there is nothing compels me to it, but my own wilfulness, I deserve no pity, no compassion, if God lashes me with the severest Thunders. There is no sin that's more in my Power to avoid, than this; the most barbarous Heathen can shun it, and shall I pretend Impossibility? I see it engages me to very great Uncivility, I cannot but offend all sober Company by it, they must needs be uneasy in my Society, and to hear God abus'd, and how ill I do with to my own Soul, cannot but grate upon a Heart, that hath any Sense of Religion or Honesty; nor do I see, that

People

People believe me any Whitt the more for swearing, but I render my self ridiculous, and make People think me dishonest, perfidious, and treacherous, who make so little Conscience of what I say: How can any Man trust me, that hears me abuse the best and dearest Friend I have? Or, what Credit can any Man give to me, that sees me so treacherous to God, to whom I owe all I have? How shall any Man be sure, that I am honest, that sees me deal so dissingenuously with him, who gives me Meat in due season? How can any Man believe, that I will be faithful to him, that cannot be faithful to him who hath laid the greatest Obligations upon me? Have I no other way to prove my self a Gentleman, but by this fordid course? Is this it, that will bring reputation to my Family? Is this it, that must give me Credit among Persons of my own Rank? Cannot I be a Cavalier, except I am uncivil to my God? Must I buy the favour of Men at so dear a rate? Is it worth no less than the displeasure of him, who fills Heaven and Earth with his Presence? Can there be greater ingratitude in the World, than I am guilty of by this sin? The Air I breathe in, the Earth I tread upon, the Ground which nourishes me, the Fire that warms me, are all the Gift of God; and is this the return I make, to take his Name in vain, that supports and maintains me? Do I make nothing of God's threatnings? How often doth he manifest his Displeasure against this Sin in his Word! And can I think, I am not concerned in the Commination? What Hope can I have that Christ's Blood will save me, when I swear it away, and thrust it from me with both Arms? How

justly may God damn me, that do so often wish for it! and is there any thing in nature so barbarous to itself, as I am in praying to God, as it were, to deliver me up into the clutches of the Devil? No Devil would wish himself so ill, as I do my own Soul; and is there nothing in the Inhumanity and Horror of the Sin, to discourage and terrifie me from it? Nay, I do hereby teach others to Sin, instruct those that hear me, to follow my Example; I do so sin, and spread the Contagion, infect my Neighbour, give an ill Example to others; and is this agreeable to the Character of a Christian, that is to walk in Wisdom toward them that are without, and to give no Occasion to the Adversary to speak reproachfully?

Did the Swearer but ruminate of these dissuasive Arguments, how would it cool his courage! But neglecting that, he neglects his Restorative, and speaks, as if he would be revenged on his Maker for giving him a Tongue.

How soon would the Bladder of Pride break, did the proud Man but consider that he is Dust, and what a wretched sinful Creature he is, and how much worse than other Men, and how much he forgets the Humiliation of the Son of God, who, being in the Form of God, thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no Reputation, becoming obedient to the Death of the Cross; how odious this lofty Spirit is in the sight of God; how amiable Humility; how God detests the one, and embraces the other; how Pride keeps out the Operations and Influences of God's Spirit, and how the Holy Ghost

refuses to come and lodge in that Soul, which swells with vain conceits of its own Worth; how Pride keeps him a stranger to himself; how it makes his Neighbour hate him, raises him Enemies, and makes him an Object of Contempt and Scorn; how all the Gifts, and Blessings, and Privileges he enjoys, are but the Effects of God's Charity; how the stately Fabrick, which his Soul doth animate, must shortly return to the Earth from which it was taken; What Condescension God uses towards him; How God, who commands Heaven and Earth, becomes an humble Suitor to his Creatures, and instead of consuming, courts them to yield to his Requests and Injunctions; how noble and generous it is to imitate him, who is Eternally happy in himself. O my God! Can I look upon the great Example of thy Condescension, and swell into Contempt of others! Can I see Heaven bow to Dust and Ashes, and superciliously scorn him that stands on even Ground with me! What have I that I have not received? Why then should I boast, as if I had not received it? O God! I see thee content to be born in a stable, to lie in a Manger, to be cloathed with Rags, and to submit to the hardest usage: Am I thy Servant, and do I refuse to transcribe thy Lowliness in my Mind and Behaviour? Hell is the Kingdom of Pride, and shall I become a Subject of that Empire? Shall I make *Lucifer* my Teacher? Or shall those Spirits who watch my Ruin, be my Tutors? Can I see my God approach my Soul in an humble Posture, and look high? Can I see the best of Beings lay by his Grandeur, to

converse with Creatures infinitely below him, and be loth to make my Fellow Christians, that are of a lower rank, my Companions? Alas! what is it that I boast of? What is it that puffs up my mind? Shall a Cloud, a Vapour, a drop of the Bucket, a Grasshopper, a Worm, grow into lofty Conceits of his own Dignity; a wretched Sinner, who hath deserved to be eternally miserable, and must own it as a singular Character of God's Compassion, that he hath not long ago assigned me my Portion in the Region of Torments? Can a few rich Cloaths make me a better Man than my Neighbour? Let Providence strip us both naked; and will it not appear that we have the same Flesh and Blood about us? Because I have more Bags of Money in my Coffer than another; am I therefore a wiser Man than he? What pitiful, childish conceits are these? I do but beg my daily Bread of God, and shall a Beggar exalt and forget himself? And when I carry about me a Body subject to a Thousand Diseases and Disasters without number, a Fabrick, which the least Disorder can break and shatter; shall so weak, so poor, so inconsiderable a thing, the Mocking-stock of every Wind and Weather, distend its Plumes, and fall in love with its own Beauty?

Were this but seriously considered, and how in the Grave all Distinctions die; how unfit that Person is to be a Christian, that is a stranger to Meekness and Humility; how those that have domineer'd in this World, and trampled upon Men, and have thought it their Interest and Glory to despise their Equals and Inferiors, are now rearing in the burning Lake; how they
that

that were Servants heretofore, do now reign like Kings in Heaven, and those that domineer'd over others heretofore, do with now, that they were in their Servants condition, and how they would now be contented to be the poorest, meanest, and most contemptible Creatures in the World, provided that they might but be freed from that never-dying Worm that gnaws their Souls; and how shortly this Pride and Haughtiness, if not seriously and timely repented of, will end in weeping, and gnashing of Teeth.

Were but these Things rightly and seriously pondered, it would cause a very strange alteration in the lofty censorious Man's design and resolutions; but while these Observables are passed by as Things out of his Element, no Marvel if he Idolizes himself, and like a Hedge-hog, wraps himself up in his own soft Down, and turns his Prickles to all the World besides.

Let the Soul that's careless of God's Service, and lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, but try it, and reflect; Lord! and is this a Service fit for him, that is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity! Is this slovenly Devotion a fit Present for him, who searches the Hearts and the Reins! Should my Servants serve me, as I do God, how ill should I resent it! And dare I offer the Blind and the Lame to God, which I would scorn to accept of from my Slaves and Vassals! I would have my Prayers heard, and answered, but how can I hope they'll pass for acceptable Sacrifices in Heaven, when they want the Fire of the Sanctuary to give them Flame! Will God mind a
Sup-

Supplication, in which I do not mind his Greatness, Majesty, and Holiness? Or, can I think, God is so fond of answering my Request, that he matters not with what Frame of Heart I approach his Throne? When the Primitive Christians, that certainly knew best what was to be done in order to Salvation, as having conversed with the Disciples and Apostles of our Lord, when they consecrated that Time, when their Spirits were most lively to pious Exercises, and looked upon that Religion as dead, that had not Fervency for its Ingredient; Shall I hope to come off at a cheaper Rate? Is the King Immortal, Invisible, Blessed for evermore to be put off with the Chips and Shavings of Devotion? Should not I give him the Cream and Marrow of my Endeavour, that hath greater Power over me than my Master, my Father, or my Prince? So great a God, and so mean a Sacrifice? So infinite a Majesty, and so pitiful a Present? Can I reflect with what Zeal and Fervour he is adored in the Mansions above, and can I put him off with Ice and Frost below? He makes his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers flames of Fire; Flames indeed; their Love, their Delight, their Obedience, burns bright and steady for ever; and shall I not learn of those Ministers above, to Worship him on Earth? Can I have better Tutors? Who so fit to be my School-masters, as they that Wait upon the Almighty day and night? How deliberate, how circumspect am I in my Addresses to my King, and is not God a greater Prince than he? What is my careless Devotion, but mocking
of

of God; and my drowsy Prayer, what is it, but playing with him at whose presence the Mountains tremble? Am not I afraid of Vengeance; or can I think, God will suffer a Wretch that lives upon his Mercy, and makes no better Return, go unpunished? How justly may he deny me his Grace and Assistance, who do not seek it more earnestly? How justly may he say, *Depart from me, I know thee not*, who am so indifferent whether I enjoy the Light of his Countenance, or no? How justly may he refuse to be found by him, who seeks him as if his Favour deserved no pains or trouble? Strive, as it were for your Lives, to enter in at the strait Gate, saith the great Redeemer of Man; and is this taking the Kingdom of Heaven by force, when I look upon it as a Thing that may be had at any Time, upon a *Lord have Mercy upon me*? Is this wrestling and striving, when I suffer any outward worldly Concern, tho' never so slight and trivial, to take me off from minding the Great Concern of my Soul? Is this giving all Diligence to make my Calling and Election sure, when I am infinitely more concerned how to secure a small Sum of Money, than I am to secure those Treasures which fade not away? My God is not weary of doing Good to my Soul and Body, and shall I be weary of Obedience? My Saviour was not weary of suffering for me, and shall I be weary of adoring him? The holy Angels are not weary of attending me, and shall I be weary of Love and Self-denial? Will God give a Reward to Men that stand yawning and stretching themselves in his Vineyard,

yard, unresolved whether they shall work or no? A Reward indeed they shall have, but such a Reward as Hypocrites receive, a Reward from which *Good Lord deliver us*. And am I so stupid that nothing of all this can move me, neither the Glory of God, nor the Interest of my Soul, nor all that can be said against my want of Zeal and Fervency of Spirit?

Ah! I am to run for my Life, and shall I make stops by the way, or look about, or think that by slow steps I am like to save my self from the wrath to come? Death hastens, the Devil hastens to make a Prey of me, and shall not I make haste to escape their Talons?

Were these Reasons laid home by serious Consideration, they would rouse the Soul from her Slumber, and make her see how dangerous her Rest is, and how dear that sleep will cost her she is for the present lull'd in, if it be not suddenly dispelled and scattered; but want of Consideration makes the careless Sinner fancy God a Being without Gall, one that hath no Sense of Honour, and that is pleased with his Indifferency in Religion, as well as himself: This is *it* makes him entertain very gross, absurd and unreasonable Conceits concerning that All-wise, most excellent, and most loving Being, despise a Treasure of infinite Value, trample on the Pearl of Price, and forget what the Hope of God's Calling is, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance is in the Saints.

He that mistrusts God's Providence limits the Holy One of *Israel*; yet have I known such a Sin
blown

blown away, and turned into heroick Confidence in God, by such serious Ratiocinations as these ; And am I indeed afraid of Want, and being destitute of Necessaries and Conveniences which other Men enjoy ! Am I God's Creature, and can I think God will take no Care of his Creature ! He that fed the young Ravens, will he deny me my daily Bread ! He that gives all Creatures their Meat in due Season, will he forget me when he unlocks his universal Store-house ! He that opens his Hand, and satisfies the Desire of every living Thing, will he shut me out of the Number of the Living ? He that cloathed the Lilies of the Field, will not he much more cloath me ? Is God concerned for the meanest of his Creatures, and will not he be concerned for the noblest Work of the Creation ? Do I see, how the Birds of the Air do all depend upon him, and the Sparrow that hath dined, and knows not where to get his Supper, yet cheerfully waits upon God's Providence ; and shall not I ? He that provides for Beasts and Fowls of the Air, and Fish in the Sea, will he shake off his Care and Thoughts of me ? How impossible is all this, if I believe God to be the great Preserver of Men ? Nay, he that hath provided for me hitherto, why should I mistrust he will not provide for me for the Future ? Is his Hand shortned, or his Strength abated ? Is not he the same God now he was some Years ago ? Is his Plenty decayed, or is God at a Loss how to supply me for the Time to come ? My Unbelief, indeed, may make him hold his Hand, and hinder him from doing any mighty work for me, but what can I

fear.

fear, if in the use of lawful Means I throw my self upon him? May be I get not what I would have; but if I get what he thinks fit for me, is it not much better? How often have I been in straits and exigencies, and God hath found out some Way or other to deliver me, and shall I, by my Unbelief, hinder him from doing such another mighty Work for me? If I trust him, I honour him, and shew forth his Glory; and to such God cannot but shew his Salvation. I do not want for the present, why should I believe I shall want hereafter, when I know not whether I shall live a Day to an end? How careful is God of mine Ease, when he would not have me trouble mine Head with anxious Cares? What do I get by my immoderate carkings but Torment of Mind? Is it not much sweeter to rest upon God's Goodness, and enjoy Content? I am never the nearer a Supply, when I have afflicted and vexed my Mind, and why should I put my Spirits into an Agony for nothing? Is this mistrustful Caring and Carking a Character of Heathens, and shall I apostatize from Christianity, and turn Infidel? Is this the Temper of Men that know not the true God, and shall I disgrace my Religion, and imitate their Unbelief? Had not I better rely on God's Word, who hath said, *I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee*, than make my life a Hell upon Earth? With all my solicitous Thoughts I cannot add one Cubit to my Stature, and shall I spend so much Labour and Industry in vain? What must the Spirits above think to see me torment my self about that I cannot help, and to see me roll *Sisybus* his

his Stone, which when I have brought to such a pitch, rolls down again, and renews my Pains, with my Grief and Sorrow! How must those incorporeal Beings above pity such fruitless Labours! Of how many Men have I read, and heard, that have trusted God in despite of all Improbabilities, and God hath succoured and assisted them beyond Expectation: *Elijah*, I. Kings 17. 9. goes to *Sarepta*, meets with a Widow-woman gathering Sticks, in order to kindle a Fire, and to dress the last handful of Meal that was in the Barrel, and the few Drops of Oil that remained in the Bottle, all that the Wretch had left to support the Life of herself and Son, for it was a Time of Famine, and it was in a manner a Funeral Dinner too, for she intended to make this her last Meal, and so to expire and give up the Ghost. Here was little to spare, one would think, for a Traveller, especially if that had been her Maxim, which is so usual with us, that *Charity begins at Home*; she knew not the Prophet, whether he would do Miracles, or no. In this great exigency and strait, the Man of God bid her dress the Flower and Oil she had left, for him, and afterwards take care for herself and Son. A strange Request! 'Tis true, he tells her that the God of *Israel* had said, That the Barrel of Meal shall not waste: But these were Words, and what are they to a hungry Stomach, and croaking Bowels, to give that little *All* away to a stranger, and starve herself and Son, upon cold Prophecie?

Yet, behold her Faith throws open all the Flood-gates of Impossibility; she believes, and
 trust

trusts against Sense, even to a Contradiction, goes and gives that little she hath left to a stranger, and, by that Faith, forces, as it were, Heaven into a Miracle; for she had no sooner dressed the Remainder for the Prophet; but the Barrel is filled again by Angels, and so it continued till the Lord sent Rain upon the Earth. Why should not I do as they have done, and put it to the Trial? Sure I am, I can lose nothing by it. I will therefore be industrious in my lawful Calling, and leave the Success to God: I will use those honest means to live which the Scripture warrants, and commit my self to him, whose Eyes are over all his Works. If he please to bless me, I'll praise him; if not, I'll admire his Sovereignty and Greatness, who is not bound to give me any Thing: And lest my sins should separate between his Kindness and my Necessities, and turn away his Face from me, because I answer not the end he made me for, as all other Creatures do, that share in his Protection, and Providential Care, I will watch against those Corruptions which do so easily beset me, and strive to glorifie God in my Soul and Body; and then, the kindest Dispensations of his Providence will be mine, and all Things will work together for my Good.

Such Thoughts will drive out the Evil Spirit of Mistrustfulness. But while the Enemy meets with no Opposition, no Wonder if he securely revels in the Soul, makes Man a Burthen to himself, prompts him sometime even to unlawful Courses, and doth not let him rest

rest, till he desperately resolves with him in the Poet,

Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.

*If Heaven be deaf, and will no Pity shew,
I'll try what Hell and the black Host can do.*

Had the Covetous but a Heart to think with himself, Vain, Foolish Man, how loth am I to confess my self guilty of this Vice! how do I deceive my self with the fair Names of good Husbandry and Frugality! But will these Delusions stand the Fire? Will these Paper Walls be Proof against everlasting Burnings? If there be such a Sin as Covetousness, and that Sin so odious to God and his Holy Angels, as Christ and his Apostles make it, and so great an impediment to everlasting Happiness as the Scripture represents, it must needs be worth knowing, Whether I am infected with this Plague, especially since my Behaviour and Actions look as if I were. Why should the Apostle call this Sin idolatry, but because it makes Men set their Affections on this World, more than upon that which is to come; and more on their Riches, Estates, or Incomes, than upon God, and everlasting Glory, whereby God is robbed of his Honour, and that high Esteem and Love, which is God's due as he is God, is given to the Creature, which in God's sight is lighter than Nothing and Vanity? And is not this my Case? How is my Soul fixed upon this World? How close doth my Heart stick to the Profits and Advantages it

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affords?

affords? How is my Soul bound up with my Corn, and Wine, and Oil? How do I fancy that all my Happiness is gone, when these outward Comforts are gone! Did ever sin grieve me a quarter so much as a Temporal Loss? Did offending a Gracious God ever cost me the Tenth Part of the Tears I shed, for being deprived of a little shining Clay? How hearty is my Joy under the Blessings of God's left Hand? How little am I affected with the Blessings of his Right? How far greater Satisfaction doth my thriving in the World give me, than my thriving in Grace and in the Knowledge of the Lord *Jesus Christ*? How loth am I to honour God with my Substance; How unwillingly, how grudgingly, do I part with any thing considerable for charitable Uses? I find fault with this sin in another, and shall not I reprehend it in my self? I complain of my Neighbour of being hard-hearted, and unkind to People in distress: And is that a Virtue in me, which is a Vice in another? *Dionysius* the Tyrant wondered at his Son, that with all the Gold and Silver he had in his House, he had made no Man his Friend; And may not I justly wonder at my self, who, as long as I have lived, have not made my self *Friend of the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, that at my Death I may be received into everlasting Habitations? How loth am I to part with any of this World's Goods for God's Service? How happy do I count my self, when Religion doth cost me nothing? How loth am I to be at the least charges for Heaven? How doth it grieve me, when I spend any thing upon Religion? How do I deat upon these sub-

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linary Vanities? How far greater Pains do I take to be rich, than to be happy for ever! How can I dispense with a Sin for Profit's sake! How little of my Desires and Breathings hath God, and a bleeding Saviour! How dull am I under the most lively Descriptions of the Joys of Heaven! How dull under the stupendious Offers of Grace and Mercy! How dead under the joyful Message of Pardon! How dull, when tempted by all the ravishing Arguments of God's Love, to love him above all! What means my Unwillingness to take God for my greatest Portion? What means that Quickness, Sagacity, and Wisdom, when my Riches, Plenty, or worldly Prosperity is concerned, and that strange Dumbness, when God courts, and beseeches my Soul to lay hold on Eternal Life? Are not these evident Signs, that the World draws and attracts my Heart most powerfully? God sees, my Heart is not upright with him; he sees, I am afraid to take up with him alone; he sees, how Covetousness hath possessed my Soul; and can I cherish this Root of all Evil in my Breast, and not tremble at the Danger my Soul is in? Am I by the Apostles Verdict an Idolater, and do I make light of so great a Guilt? If no Idolater must expect a Crown of Glory, Alas! What can I look for, but Eternal Darkness? Could *Aristippus* throw his Gold into the Sea, and say, 'Tis better I should drown thee, than that thou shouldst undo me; And shall I be a Slave to my Wealth? When I read that 'tis easier for a Camel to enter thorow the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man who sets his Heart

on his Riches, to enter into Heaven, am not I frighted with the Expression? I find how this Sin deprives me of a Holy Communion with God, and shall I lose my greatest Comfort and Support and Satisfaction for it? How doth the Gold become dim! How is the most fine Gold changed through this pestilential Breath! The Life and Sense I once had of Spiritual Objects, decays and dwindles away in me, and an Insipidness in Holy things succeeds; my Relish of them perishes, and they become to me as a curious Dish to a Person of a corrupted Stomach, I nauseate the very Dainties of my Heavenly Father: This sin is enough to damp and kill all the good Seed God sows in me. If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him; and can I be contented without the Love of God? If God be not my Friend, what doth the Friendship of the whole World signifie, when my Soul must leave this Tabernacle, and appear before God's Bar? O God, I shall have so many Witnesses against me, that I shall not know what to say, or whither to betake my self for Refuge; the Poor will accuse me, because I have not opened my Hand and Heart to them; my own Conscience will accuse me, because I have not been a good Steward of the Means God gave me; the Ministers of God will accuse me, because whatever was laid out upon my Pride and Lust, was thought too little; and the least Kindness I shewed to those that wait at God's Altar, too much: The Devils will accuse me, because having a Soul so Great, so Noble, so Precious, I did employ it chiefly in scraping a little

little dross and dung together; nay, the Lord *Jesus* will accuse me, because his Example of Contentedness, and Heavenly-mindedness, would not allure me into Imitation; God will accuse me, because having furnished me with all the Motives and Encouragements imaginable, to mind Heaven more than Earth; I preferred this Earth before all the Joys of Heaven; and how shall I bear up under all this Weight?

Would the poor deluded Worldling but let such Thoughts sink into his Heart, what a Damp would it strike on his strong Desires after the World; and how would it make his immoderate Love to these sublunary Riches, break into Longings after a nobler Inheritance? But neglecting this, he, Serpent-like, feeds on Dust, and prepares for Anxiety, Discontent, and Vexation of Spirit, and for a miserable death: Like a Hog, lies rooting in the Earth, and buries his Soul in a Chest of Money; despises all Admonitions to Charity, and, like the Smith's Dog, can hear the hammering and beating of his Master, and endure the Sparks flying about his Ears, without being stirr'd or concern'd at it.

Hypocrisie is a Sin, which the painted Christian does not easily part withal, yet would he reflect, like a Person that hates to sew Pillows under his own Elbows: Can I read Christ's Discourses against the Pharisees and not ask my own Heart, Whether the Pharisees Temper be an Emblem of my Complexion? Can I remember that odious Name in the Gospel, and not reflect on the Plagues that are threatned them? And do I know these Plagues, and do they dart no

fear, no Terror into my Soul? I am loth to believe I am so bad a Man; but what if God, and the Great Day, should find me so? Have I no Self-end in my Religious Duty? What is it puts me many times upon doing good, Applause from Men, or the Love of God? Do not I pretend God's Glory sometimes, when I aim at nothing but mine own? Do not I draw nigh to God with my Lips, when in my Heart and Conversation I deny him? Do not I, by pretending to please God, neglect my Duty to my Neighbour? And while I am hot for Devotion, hate my Brother in my Heart? I am loth to neglect my Prayer, but am I as loth to neglect relieving such a Believer that groans in Prison, or Poverty? Am not I more severe in pressing the lesser Concerns of Religion, than I am in urging the greater? Do not I commend that in a rich or great Man, which I can reprehend in my Inferiours, or meaner Persons; Do not I require those Duties of other Men, which my self am loth to practise? Do not I applaud my self for my own Sanctity, while I despise others, whom I fancy not so holy as I am? Am not I more curious to know other Mens Conditions, than mine own? Am not I more zealous in publick, than I am in private? Am not I religious for filthy Lucre's Sake? Do not I make a Gain of Godliness, and use Religion as a Cloak to cover my secret Sins? Do not I make Devotion a Scaffold to erect my own Credit and Profit by? What is Hypocrisie, if this be not? Tho' I can hide it from the sight of Men, can I conceal it from him, who knows my down-sitting, and my up-rising,

and

and understands my thoughts afar off? Can I remember the Fate of *Judas*, and not think of a serious Repentance? Can I hear the Son of God call so often, *Woe, woe to the Hypocrites*, and hug the Sin in my Bosom? Shall I harbour a Snake there, which will sting me into endless gnawings of Conscience? How shortly will all these Delusions be discovered? Before I am a few Days older, God may summon me, and lay open all my deceits and juggles in Religion. Thus others have been served; Why should I think to escape? And tho' the Day of Judgment is not come, yet there are Angels, there are Righteous Souls, before whom the Impostures may be laid open, and discovered to my shame, and sorrow, and astonishment, as soon as my Soul leaves my Body senseless. Do I think to blind the Eyes of him, in whose Book all my Members are set down? Is the Portion of Hypocrites no Discouragement? What Promise in the Gospel can I lay hold of, during this Condition? They all run to the upright in Heart, and must I go without these Cordials? Must I see others run away with these Treasures, while my self can expect nothing but God's Curse and Anger? Must I see others go to possess the promised Land, while I must stay behind in a Wilderness? Must I see others gather *Manna*, and feed upon the rich Clusters of *Canaan*, while my own Soul must perish for want of that Bread of Life? *Lord, who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that walks uprightly, and works Righteousness, and speaks the truth in his Heart.* And must I have no Seat in yonder Mansions?

No house in that *Jerusalem*, which is above? No habitation in this City, *whither the Tribes go up, the Tribes of the Lord, unto the Testimony of Israel, to give Thanks unto the Name of the Lord?* O my Soul, behold thy Salvation comes, his reward is with him, and his work before him. Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Away, and hate this garment spotted by the flesh; these are not the Spots of God's Children; these are not the Characters of God's Favourites: Spots they are, but of Leopards, Marks of Wolves that come in Sheeps cloathing, Signs of Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of Dead Men's bones, and all Uncleanneſs.

Such serious thoughts would check Hypocriſie; but the vain Man hardens his heart againſt them, locks them out, will give them no Entertainment, and that makes him ſerve God to pleaſe the Devil, and turn Religion into a mere ſhew and formality, burn in Words, and freeze in Deeds; and like that Son in the Goſpel, ſay, *I go Sir*, but he goes not.

From the Premiſſes, we may eaſily gueſs what to think of other ſins, *viz.* That the great Cauſe of them, is want of Conſideration; and therefore the Holy Ghoſt likens Men that live in any Sin, or indulge themſelves in any Tranſgreſſion, to a Horſe that ruſhes into the Battle, and conſiders not what he doth; ventures among Swords and Arrows, and the greateſt Dangers, without recollecting what will be the Iſſue of it. *Jer.* 8. 6. Conſideration is the Bridle that muſt govern our Senſe

Sense and Appetite; take that away, and the Beast runs away with the Rider, and hastens him into a Thousand Inconveniencies.



CHAP. VI.

Of the various Advantages of serious Consideration; 'tis that, which makes a Man Master of all Christian Duties; it helps a Man to improve Sublunary Objects into Heavenly Contemplations. 'Tis the greatest Support under Afflictions; disposes a Man to be a Worthy Receiver of the Lord's Supper; prepares him for an Angelical Life on Earth; makes him prudent and discreet in Secular Affairs, and Business.

THO' in the preceeding Chaptets we have already in a great measure discovered, what Man may hope for from Consideration, and of what use it is to a truly serious and Christian life; yet we must not leave so rich a Subject *thus*, without giving an account of some other positive Advantages, which do render it very desirable to a rational Man. And,

I. It hath most certainly a very great influence upon all Christian Duties; the Celestial Luminaries have not a greater influence upon the Bodies of Men, and Beasts, and Plants, than Consideration hath upon these Spiritual Endowments; whatever Qualification Christ or his Apostles require

require or recommend, 'tis by Consideration of the Excellency and Dignity of that Duty, that Men must expect to arrive to it.

The First and Great Commandment is, *Thou shalt love thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy mind.* But he shall never be Master of this Duty, that doth not frequently and seriously consider the immense and stupendious Love of God to him; and indeed, then I may hope to be acquainted with a sincere and cordial Love to God, when I give Leave to such Considerations as these, to impregnate my Understanding. O my God! Can I think of so great, so holy, so infinite, so merciful, so munificent a Being, and forbear to be enamoured with thee? Thy Greatness over-awes, thy Holiness directs, thy Infinity supports, thy Mercy Charms, thy Munificence invites thy poor unworthy Creatures: Whence are all my Mercies, but from thee? Thou art the Spring, the Fountain of them all. Whatever Blessings are conveyed to me by the Hands of Second Causes, they come originally from thee, and thou movest and orderest those second Causes, to come in to my Assistance. By thee have I been upheld ever since I was born; when I lay in the Shades of Nothing, thou didst awake me into a Being, gavest me a rational Soul, a Soul capable of admiring, adoring, and worshipping Thee; and ever since thy Mercies have followed me; and thou hast been a Pillar of a Cloud unto me by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by Night; what Parts, Gifts or Abilities I have, they are thy Gifts, and Characters of thy Compassion: Thou

Thou orderest my Steps, thou art about my Bed, and about my Paths, and dost preserve me in all my Ways ; many a Time should I have stumbled, and fallen, and perished irrecoverably, but that thou hast supported me, and given Charge to thy holy Angels to be my Guardians. I had been a barren Wilderness, if thou hadst not rained Showers of Grace upon me, and made me fruitful. I had brought forth nothing but Death, if thou hadst not shined upon me. I had continued lying in the Mire, if thou hadst not pulled me out ; and must have remained in the horrible Pit for ever, if thou hadst not set my Feet upon a Rock. I had continued blind, if thou hadst not opened mine Eyes ; deaf to thy Admonitions, if thou hadst not unlocked mine Ears. I could never have risen, if thou hadst not lent me thy helping Hand. I must have sunk, if thou hadst not supported me ; and perished, if thou hadst not guided and directed me. I had committed greater Sins, if thy restraining Power had not kept me ; and what could have hindred me from running with others into excess of Riot, if thou hadst not removed the Snares which were laid for me to catch me in Ruin ? It is thy Doing that I have not done so ; that I have abstained from these Evils, thy Assistance is the Cause ; and that I have believed thee, I am beholden to thy Mercy. O my God ! how often have I deserved thine Anger ? And yet in the midst of thy Wrath thou thinkest upon Mercy. What Judgments mightst not thou have inflicted on me for my wilful Sins ? But thou hast sent none as yet,

yet, and all to magnifie thy Mercy. Every Morning thy Mercies are renewed upon me, and with the Natural there rises upon me the Sun of Righteousness, with Healing under his Wings. Thou prosperest my Endeavours, givest Success to all my lawful Undertakings, thou preservest me from those Disasters which befall other Men. How wisely dost thou order my Affairs? How often dost thou bring Light out of Darkness, and turnest my Affliction into the greatest Joy? How wonderful are thy Providences to me and mine? How often have I feared such an Accident would be my Ruine, and God hath turned it into the greatest Good? How wisely hast thou many times denied me temporal Mercies, because thou hadst a mind to enrich me with Spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places? What Friends, what Benefactors hast thou raised me? How miraculously hast thou turned the Hearts of Men sometimes into Mercy and Compassion for my Good? How often hast thou heard my Prayer, and granted me the Request of my Lips? When I have been in the greatest Straits, how hast thou shewn me a Way to escape? How strangely hast thou wheeled Things about for my deliverance? How hast thou allured me by the various Tokens of thy Love to love thee better than the World? How great hath been thy care of my temporal Concerns, but how far greater thy Care of the Concerns of my Soul? How strong have been the Convictions thou hast vouchsafed me? How great the Light thou hast imparted to me? How bright that Knowledge thou hast revealed to me?

me? How numerous the Checks of my own Conscience which thou hast sent me? How frequent the Motions of thy Spirit thou hast shed into my Soul? How often hast thou reasoned the Case, and expostulated with me, and, as the Angel did to *Balaam*, stood in a narrow Way, where there was no turning neither to the Right nor to the Left; and all, because thou would'st not have me stand out any longer against thy most gracious offers of Salvation? How hast thou adjured me by the Bowels of *Jesus*, by the Wounds and Agonies of the Son of God, to die unto Sin, and to live unto Righteousness? How strange hath been thy condescension! and doth not all this deserve my Love? Is not here enough to warm my Affections towards thee! False, stubborn Heart! What canst thou plead for thy Averseness from God, after such a Prospect of his Favours? Notwithstanding my long Contempt of these Loving-kindnesses of the Lord, I am yet alive, and on this side Hell! How may I stand amazed at this prodigious Long-suffering of my God! Had any Man shewn me but the Ten thousandth part of that Love which God hath manifested to me, how should I love him! How should I adore his Name! How should I study to please him! What Pains should I take to manifest my Gratitude! How should I revere his Memory! How should I speak of his Favours! How should I praise his Munificence! How should I employ my Rhetorick, and ransack my Poetry, study Eloquence, speak by my Eyes, my Posture, my Gestures, to make him understand my Affection!

on! Can Man's Kindness be so prevalent, and shall not the Goodness of God fire my Soul into a practical Love to his Name? Can I do less than love him to whom I owe all I have? To love him is my Happiness, my Interest, my greatest Felicity: O my God! Shall I love a little shining Clay, a little Dust, a little Earth, and not love thee, who art worth more than Ten thousand Worlds? Shall I love Father and Mother, and not love thee, who hast been better to me than my Parents, and when my Father and Mother have forsaken me hast taken me up, and with everlasting Kindness visited me? Shall I love my Friend, and shall I not love thee, my Joy, my Treasure, my Hiding-place? But how can I love thee, except I keep thy Commandments? How can I be thy Friend, except I do whatsoever thou commandest me? Shall I love thee in Words only, who hast loved me in Deeds? Shall I flatter thee with my Lips, and hate thee in my Heart? Shall I (*Judas-like*) kiss thee, and betray thee? Love thee, and love my Sins, which are thy greatest Enemies? Did I but love thee as I do a dear Friend, how easie would all thy Precepts seem? How little Reason should I have to complain of the tediousness of thy Yoke? What great, what noble, what generous Actions would thy Love put me upon? Should I pretend to love my Prince, and affront his Law, how soon would my Love be accused of a Lye? How can I be said to love thee, while I hate to conform my self to thy Will and Pleasure? How vain will my Love appear in the last Day, if it hath been a Stranger

to Obedience here? The Angels love thee, and they have no other Way to demonstrate their Love but by running at thy Commands. Thy Holy Fire burns in their Breast, and makes them fly to execute thy Orders. Do I hope to be like unto the Angels of God hereafter, and shall not I take Pattern by their obediential Love while I sojourn here? O my God! thou art the proper Object of my Love; I rob thee of thy Honour, and commit Sacrilege, if I love any Thing here below better than thee. I am married to thee, and I must love nothing above thee. *When no Eye pitied me to have compassion upon me, when I was cast into the open field to the loathing of my Person; thou didst pass by me, and sawest me polluted with my Blood, and saidst unto me when I was in my Blood, Live; Thou didst cause me to multiply as the bud of the Field, and when it was the time of Love, thou didst spread thy Skirt over me, and coveredst my Nakedness, and swarest unto me, and enteredst into a Covenant with me, and I became thine, Ezek. 16. 5, 6, 7, 8.* And, shall my Soul be married to so great a Prince, and play the Harlot? O my Lord! hast thou united me so close unto thee, and shall I defile my self by setting my Love on Trifles? It hath gone astray too long, it hath wandred up and down and found no Rest; and shall it lose itself for ever, and, like a Mole, run blindly from one Bury to another? What Man, what Devil can hurt me, while I love thee, without whose Command no Creature dares stir or move? What should discourage me from loving thee, when

I have all the Promises of the Bible to prompt me to it? If I lose any Thing in this World by loving thee, hast not thou Treasures enough to recompence my Losses? If Men despise me for loving thee, hast not thou Honour and Glory enough to crown me withal? If I do not thrive in outward Riches, by loving thee, hast not thou who art rich in Mercy, a Pearl of price to bestow upon me when this Life is ended? I'll trust thee, O my God, and when my Lusts invite me to act like a Beast, I'll obey thee, and strive to be perfect, as thou art perfect: When Men entice me to sin, I'll hearken to thee, and venture the disgrace or injury they can inflict upon me; when the World tempts me to be careless of my Salvation, I'll follow thee, and work out my Salvation with fear and with trembling. Thus I'll manifest to the World that thou art dearer to me than all that's great, or rich, or glorious in the World. O that I were drunk with Love! O that all my Faculties were filled with Love! O that I could love thee till I fainted away for Love! O that my mind were so intent upon thee that I could relish nothing but thy Love! O that my Soul did overflow with Love! O that this stream might rise above its Banks! O that it might know no Bounds! O that I were so swallowed up of Divine Love, that I could not tell whether I were in the Body, or out of the Body! O that the Contemplation of God's Love were so sweet to me, that all other Objects might be Gall and Bitterness to me! O that I were able to go out of my self into the vast Light of the Love of God! O that I had more of this rich
Wine!

Wine? O that the King would lead me into his *Wine Cellar*! O that my Soul did thirst more after him! O that this Dew of Heaven might fall on my ~~R~~eece Day and Night! O that the Love of God might totally conquer me! O that every thought of mine might breath nothing but Love! O that it were my Meat and Drink to love thee! This is perfect Angels Food. *Meats for the Belly, and the Belly for Meats, God shall destroy both it and them, but this Food lasts for ever.*

Delight in God is a Duty as necessary as the former, but how is it possible I ever should arrive to it, without I summon my Soul, by Consideration, to take a View of the Glory and Beauty which sparkles in that amiable Being? I shall quickly feel my heart in another temper than ordinarily I do, if I bespeak it in such Language as this, *Delight in God*! O my Soul, canst thou name that charming Name of God, and feel no Joy, no Gladness in thy Affections? Is God so dull an Object that it cannot stir, or rouse thee from thy Lethargy? Where dost thou see a more lovely Being? Survey the World, Where is there so ravishing an Object? Can there be a lovelier Being, than he, from whom whatever is beautiful in Men or Angels flows? How beautiful must he be, to whom all these Inferior Beauties owe their Being. If the Streams be so lovely, What must the Water in the Fountain be? Alas! What is the Sun, but a dark Lanthorn in comparison of God? What is all the Light our Eyes behold, but a Rush-Candle to him that is the Father of Lights? *Truly the Light is sweet, and a pleasant Thing it is*

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for the Eyes to behold the Sun, Eccl. 11. 7. Indeed, whatever is rich, and to be admired in Objects, would signifie nothing to us without Light; and, if created Light be so delightful, O God, How amiable must thou be, who dwellest in a Light inaccessible! If the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, deserve my Delight, how more justly may the Great Creator of all these challenge it, whose Glory doth infinitely transcend all the little Twinklings and Radiations which shine in sub-lunary Objects! O my God, were thy Beauty viewed, as it shines in the Works of Creation, as it sparkles in the wise ordering and Management of the World, as it blazes in the Redemption of Mankind, as it glisters in Regeneration of the Soul, as it dazles the Eye in the Glorification of a Sinner, how lovely wouldst thou appear! And since neither thy Being, nor thy Works are in vain, since what thou art, and what thou doest, must needs be for some certain End; What can I conclude, but that thou discoverest so much Beauty, and Splendor, and Glory to poor Mortals, because we should rejoice and delight in thee, and be ravish'd with thee? O my Soul, without this Delight in God, thou canst never be happy; God is the adequate Object, and thy Center, and he alone can give thee rest; and except he fills and satisfies thy Powers, they'll be forced, like *Noah's Dove*, to flutter and fly up and down, wander in a Desert, and lose themselves in a barren Wilderness. Thou rejoicest in a Father, in a Mother, in a Friend, but God is more than a Father, more than a Mother, more than a Friend to thee. He doth

doth more for thee. He loves thee better than any of these can do. Thou rejoicest in a curious Landskip, in the delicate Situation of a House, in a lovely Arbour, in a sweet and gentle River, but hast not thou greater Reason to rejoice in him, who hath made all these? When thou delightest in God, thou art at rest, and thy Rest declares thy Happiness. How canst thou hope thy Religious Exercises will be accepted in Heaven, while thou knowest not what this holy Delight doth mean? The Heathens guess'd at the Acceptance of their Sacrifices, by the cheerful burning of the Fire upon the Altar; The greater thy Delight is in God, the stronger Argument thou hast, that thy Devotion meets with Applause and Approbation in Heaven. Variety is strangely delightful to thee here on Earth, and Why then hath God so little of thy Delight? Tho' God be but One, yet in that One God are so many Pleasant Objects, that wert thou to live here a thousand Years, in this One God thou might'st every Day meet with fresh Objects of Delight; with this God thou art to be ravished to all Eternity, and then sure there is Variety enough in him to revive and recreate thee for a few Years in this present World. Survey all his blessed Attributes, his Holiness, his Omnipresence, his Omniscience, his Immutability, his Immenfity, his Wisdom and Eternity; Survey his Goodness to Mankind, his Perfection, his All-sufficiency, his Willingness to advance Man to the Enjoyment of that Glory which the blessed Angels do possess; Survey his Revelations, his Manifestations of himself, to this dark ignorant World; his Statutes and

Judgments, and Laws, and the Reasonableness and Equity of them all; survey his various Dispensations under the Old and New Testaments, his Methods of converting Men, and the various Degrees whereby he hath proceeded in the Reformation of the wretched Progeny of *Adam*; survey his wonderful Love in *Christ Jesus*, and his Pity and Compassion to Rebels, to Traitors, to his greatest Enemies; survey the Benefits and Advantages, which arise from *Christ's* Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession; survey his Promises, and Threatnings, his Mercy to the Penitent, his Justice to the unbelieving Sinner; survey his Mercies, both publick and private, both Spiritual and Temporal, and his various Favours to all Mankind, to thy Fellow Christians, to thy Relations, and thy self; survey the Privileges he allows to those that fear him, Privileges which are the Torments of Devils, to see what Men may come to, and themselves must remain for ever deprived of; survey the Prerogatives of these Men, how he gives them Leave to call upon him, answers them when they call, permits them to call themselves his Children, his Darlings, his Favourites, his Jewels, his Friends, and the Apple of his Eye; survey the Glory which God receives from all his Creatures, in that all conspire to fulfil his Will; survey the Joy, the Glory, the Happiness, the Triumphs, the Songs, the Hallelujahs, which he has designed for his Servants, whereof they have a Taste here, and which e'er long they shall enter upon, to their eternal Content and Satisfaction. O my Soul, Who can express
all

all the pleasing Objects, which are in this Glorious God thou dost adore.

Vast Ocean of Delight! How can my Soul be weary of delighting in thee? Where every Object is of a multiplying Nature, and the farther I go, the more Charms I meet withal; every Beam, every Ray, that darts from thy Throne, every Work of thy Power (and Oh how infinite is the Number of them!) administers Delight. And sure he deserves to be starved, that may come to those Waters of Life, and is invited to participate of this Milk and Honey, and to delight his Soul in Fatness, and prefers the stolen Waters of Sin, before these living Waters, which, like those in the *Esculapian* Well, are not capable of Putrefaction.

Look, O my Soul, look with pity on the poor distracted World, that delights in Things hellish and sinful, worldly, mean and trivial. Who would envy the sottish Pleasures of *Strato*, *Anthony*, *Tiberius*, *Calligula*, *Commodus*, *Cotis*, *Demetrius*? pleasures fitter for Bulls, and Bears, and Goats, than for Men of Reason? they dream they eat and drink, and are at a great Feast, but in the Morning when they wake, they find themselves empty. A rational complacency in God, is Bread incorruptible, this is the Meat thou must live upon for ever; thou delightest in a curious Picture, why not in him that's altogether lovely? Thou delightest in a delicate Shape, Why not in him that's fairer than the Children of Men? Thou delightest in a pleasant Garden, in well-ordered Walks, in flowery Meadows; Why not in him, whose gracious Presence can make a Dungeon a

Paradise? Hoise up thy Sails, O my Soul, let thy Desire crave all that's rich, good and magnificent; Why, in God thou hast it all, in a most eminent manner; while others delight in their Plenty, thou canst delight in him, who is plenteous in Mercy unto all them that call upon him; while others delight in Knowledge, thou canst delight in him, in whom are all the Treasures of Wisdom; While others delight in the Protection of their Friends, thou canst delight in him, who is a present help in the time of trouble; while others delight in a stately Seat, thou canst delight in the secret place, and in the shadow of the Almighty. O my God, thou satisfiest the Hungry Soul, and fillest the thirsty Soul with Goodness. The Soul cannot crave beyond what thou canst give, nor ask more than thou art able to afford; the Desires of the Soul are not so infinite, but thy Store and Plenty is unspeakably more infinite than our Desires. They that cannot delight in thee, have strange brutish Souls! They see not how thou goest, how thou my God, goest in the Sanctuary; they never felt thy holy Influences; they know not what Peace thou speakest unto thy People; they are not sensible how thou dost encourage those that serve thee; they are not sensible how great the Rewards are, thou hast laid up for Men that forget what is behind them, and seek first thy Kingdom, and its Righteousness. O Goodness immense, and infinite! If every single Good is Pleasant and Delightful, how Delightful must thou be, who art that wide and ample Sea, into which all these Rivers, and Emanations

tions of Goodness run! If created Life be pleasant, how pleasant must thou be, which givest that Life! If created Wisdom be amiable, how amiable must thou be, from whom that Wisdom flows! O my God, I see, how all the pleasant Things of the World perish, but thou art the same, and thy Years do not fail, and thou endurest from one Generation to another; here therefore I'll fix my Delight; on this Rock I'll build my Joy; while others delight in numbering their Bags, I'll delight in numbering the loving Kindnesses of my God; while others delight in their Preferment, I'll delight in being adopted into the glorious Liberty of God's Children; while others delight in the greatness of their Relations, I'll delight in having the Saviour of the World for my elder Brother; while others delight in their Farms and Oxen, I'll delight in my Title to the Tree of Life; while others delight in Kingdoms and Principalities, I'll delight in him who hath made me a King and Priest unto God, and to his Father; *I will delight my self in the Lord, and he shall give the Desires of my Heart*, Psal. 37. 4.

Did the Man who is almost perswaded into *Charity*, but seriously consider, what a Stress the Gospel lays upon this pious Liberality; how *Christ* in the last Day is resolved to insist more upon this Duty, than upon any other; how he is but a Steward of those Blessings he enjoys; and how God gave him that Estate he hath with this very Intent, that he should be beneficial to those, whom Providence hath made Objects of his Bounty; how great an Im-

pediment his extreme Fondness of this World's Goods, is to his future Happiness; How it darkens his Graces, clouds his Comforts, hardens his Heart, sears his Conscience, enslaves him to the Devil; How his Charity is no more than Justice, a due Debt he owes to his poor Neighbour, for which Reason, the Holy Ghost calls Mens Alms, *Righteousness*; so that withholding our Hand from giving to People in Necessity, or from assisting them in Time of Need, is robbing them of that which is their Due; how difficult, nay, how impossible it is for a Man, that dotes on these outward Comforts, to become a true Disciple of *Christ*; with that Earnestness all the Prophets and Apostles of old, have recommended this Honouring of God with our Substance, and with the First Fruits of our Increase; How kind God's Aspect is to this Duty; How great God's Condescension is, in being willing to accept of that, as done to himself, which is done to his Servants, or *Christ's* distressed Members; How signally he blesses this Virtue, how all Faith is dead without it, how vainly that Man hopes for Heaven, that hath no Bowels of Compassion; I say, would the Man, that is unresolved, whether he shall deny himself, and give away considerably to pious Uses, but ponder all these Arguments, by the Assistance of God, it would make him resolve to lay by such a Proportion of all his Gain and Incomes for God's Service, and keep to it, and stop his Ears against all the Suggestions of the Devil to the contrary, and resign himself entirely to God's

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Providence, and leave it to God, how, and when, and where to make him amends for it, and believe, that it will most certainly be recompensed him in the Resurrection of the Just.

Meekness is so great a Duty of the Gospel, that *Christ* makes it the distinguishing Character of his Disciples, and indeed, none is more likely to arrive to it, than he that makes it his Business to consider, how famous some of the Heathens were for this Virtue ; How *Pericles* bid his Servant light him home, who had rail-ed against him all Day ; How *Socrates* put by the Calumnies that were cast upon him with this, *That the Slanderer had said nothing of him, that he found himself to be guilty of ;* How *Dion* of *Alexandria* was silent under all the Reproaches that were thrown upon him ; how unworthy of a Christian it is to do less, with all the Helps of Grace, than the other, by the Assistance of Nature only ; how this is to have the same Mind which was also in *Christ Jesus* ; What Mischief sudden Anger hurries Men into, how severely the Great Redeemer of the World checks his Disciples, that call for Fire from Heaven to consume the Men who had denied their Master Lodging ; how great the Conquest is, to subdue those Passions, which would engage us to Wrath and Fury ; how discreetly that Man can act, that curbs those unruly Affections ; how this excellent Quality adorns the Gospel of our Saviour ; how it disposes Men for a satisfactory Discharge of their Duty towards God ; How great Evils and Inconveniences it prevents ; How many
times

Times it melts the Offender if there be any Ingenuity in him, and wins more upon him, than all the fierce proceedings we can use ; How great a preparative it is for a good name, and how Men, who understand what self-conquest means, cannot but commend and celebrate it ; How in History, Men famous for this Grace are extolled above the greatest Conquerors ; How Heaven cannot but applaud it, to see Men strive to be perfect, as their Father in Heaven is perfect ; How great Wisdom it argues, to be zealous in God's Cause when his Glory is affronted, and meek in our own Concerns and Injuries ; What Peace, what Satisfaction it causes in the Soul, what Blessings are intailed upon it ; How comfortably those, who have endeavour'd to be Masters of this Temper, may leave this World, and die, as the *Jews* said of *Moses*, the meekest of Men, at the Kiss of God into eternal Glory.

Sanctification of the Lord's Day, or, which is all one, consecrating that Day to God's Service, and spending it in publick and private Religious Exercises, in Meditating, hearing the Word, praising of God, good Works, and Spiritual Conferences, is a Thing, which devout Christians have, in all Ages, thought themselves obliged to observe ; and certainly he will find great Reason to follow them, that shall engage his Soul seriously to consider some such Circumstances as these. How Holy is this Day ! How should my Soul rejoice at the dawning of it ! This is the Day which the Lord hath made, and which is to put me in mind of the greatest Mercy, that was ever
vouch-

vouchsafed to Mankind: Can there be any thing more costly than the Redemption of Man? Or can I spend too much time in commemorating so glorious a Favour? I that can spend time in rehearsing, what Jewels my Parents have left me, what Houses they have bequeathed me, what Lands they have assigned to me, what Moveables they have given me, shall I think much in spending one Day in seven, in rehearsing what God hath done for my Soul? When God allows me six Days in the Week, to follow the Business of my lawful Calling, cannot I allow one Day entire for his Service? Are the Concerns of my Soul so trivial that they do not deserve one Day in the Week? Or, is Salvation so easie a Thing, that, to spend much Time in the Contrivance of it, is altogether needless? I can allow a whole Day, sometimes Two or Three, for the Recreation of my Body, and must my Soul have none to feast itself upon God, and endless Glory? Alas! How little do these flashes of contemplating God in the Week-Days, which are so often interrupted by worldly Business, warm the Soul? How little are Men's Affections wrought upon by those Fits of Devotion, except they take a whole Day to warm their Souls at the Beams of the Sun of Righteousness? Alas! How little Seriousness do I see in those Families, where this Day is not Religiously spent, where every Person is permitted to use their Liberty, and where the publick Exercises in the Church are not seconded by private Discourses, and Prayers, and Celebrations of the Goodness of God! How loose,
how

how vain, how foolish are they commonly! How little do they mind the power of Religion! How little are they acquainted with the Spiritual Part of Godliness! What Liberty do they give themselves in their Actions, such as a conscientious Man will be afraid of! Where is my self-denial, if I cannot deny my self in my Worldly Discourses, or Thoughts, one Day? How can I hope my Spiritual Wants and Necessities should ever be discovered to me, except I do in my Closet apply what I have heard in the House of God, and water the incorruptible Seed that is sown in my Heart, by Self-examination, that it may grow, and sprout and bear Fruit? O the Joy, the Comfort, the Satisfaction I might reap from the sincere Satisfaction of this Day! How quietly might I lie down at Night, after so sweet a Converse with God all Day? How soft would my Rest be, having work'd in God's Vineyard so many Hours? How joyfully might I rise next Morning, and comfort my self with the happy Remembrance of Blessings, my Soul hath received the Day before? Thus to observe and improve this Day, would be a Prologue to my everlasting Rest, a Preface to my eternal Repose in *Abraham's Bosom*; a Presage, that I should e'er long rest from all Tears, and Sorrow, and Pain, and Anguish, and from all the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and be admitted into the Choir of Angels, to praise him Day and Night, who lives for ever and ever.

In this manner all other Duties may be compassed; the Beauty, Glory, Usefulness of them
thus

thus spread before the Understanding, Will, and Affections, are apt to work upon these Faculties, and they being prevailed upon, the Eyes, the Ears, the Hands, the Feet, will quickly do their part, and shew their readiness to obey the Command of their Superior Officers.

II. It helps Men to improve eternal Objects, into very comfortable Contemplations. When I take a View of the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, or reflect on the Air, Fire, Earth, and Water, Consideration may furnish me with very excellent Truths, and the noblest Lessons of Religion. Consideration can Metamorphose Objects, and Spiritualize them, and find out the secret Designs of the Almighty, in those Creatures, which the sensual Man looks upon, and like a Beast passes by, without any Admiration; This Eye can pierce through solid Bodies, and read the wholsom Lessons which lie hid under those grosser Mantles. For after this Manner it may argue, Take Wings, O my Soul, fly up to yonder Heaven, where the Almighty hath set a Tabernacle for the Sun, which is as a Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber; and rejoyces as a Giant to run his Race; Behold, how this glorious Planet, the great Almoner of Heaven, when he rises, revives every living Thing with his kindly Beams, and will not the increated Sun, from whom this bright Star borrows his shining Rays, when he shall rise unto the Spirits of Men made perfect in the last Day, fill them all with unspeakable Joy and Gladness? And as a dismal uncomfortable Darknes succeeds, when this created Sun doth

doth leave our Hemisphere, so think, how dreadful, how full of horror and disconsolateness that darkness must be, which must unavoidably fall on wretched impenitent Sinners, that would take no Warning, when the increated Sun shall withdraw from them his beatifical Presence for ever; behold this created Sun, how many Thousand Kindnesses it bestows upon Mankind, and doth not this put thee in mind of the Father of Lights, from whom every good and perfect Gift descends? How much bigger is this shining Body than the whole Earth; and dost not thou remember, how, before thy God, all Mankind are as Grasshoppers, or rather, as the Dust of the Balance, nay, lighter than nothing, and Vanity? The Sun, that he may enlighten the whole World, is forced to go from one place to another; but thy God, at one and the same Time, without moving his Station, can fill Heaven and Earth with his Glory.

Behold, O my Soul, the next great Light, the Moon, which, the nearer it approaches the Sun, the brighter it grows in that Part, which looks towards Heaven, tho' it becomes darker in that Part which looks towards the Earth, and when it is opposite to the Sun, loses all that Brightness it had in its conjunction with the Sun, and is only bright in that Part which respects this lower World; and dost not thou see a very lively Emblem of a converted, and unconverted Sinner in this Luminary? Behold, the nearer thou approachest the Sun of Righteousness in Purity and Holiness, the greater lustre, and the greater Happiness thou receivest; the Inhabitants of Heaven
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behold thy Brightness and Innocence, and applaud it, tho' sensual Men, may be, think thee all Darknes, all Obscurity, because thou dost not wallow in Works of Darknes with them; they, may be, look upon thee as mad and distracted, because thou art so busie, so earnest, so zealous, to please thy God, and spendest so much Time in praising, and magnifying, and glorifying of him; but those that dwell in yonder Region of Light and Bliss, know that then, and not till then, thou art Master of thy Reason, and dost act like a Person that's capable of being made Partaker of the Divine Nature. In a Word, thou art a Light to them above, and Night to Men beneath. On the other side, when thou turnest thy Back upon God, walkest opposite, and contrary to him, whatever Respect and Credit thou mayst have from the World, God and his holy Angels look upon thee as Darknes; thy Understanding, which is that Part which properly looks towards Heaven, loses all its Brightness; and no Marvel, for God alone can satisfy it; and he being gone, that Part must needs be perfect Night; and no Wonder if, upon this Darknes, thy Love inclines vigorously to the World, and thy Affections are altogether carried out after the Dross and Dung of this transitory Earth, if thy Thoughts are all engaged about the World, all thy Speeches employed about the World, and thou becomest wise for the World, and lovest all thy Wisdom for God, and for Salvation, and thou art Night to the Spirits above, and Day to Men below.

O my Soul, Canst thou look upon the Sun and Moon, and not remember how differently God deals with triumphing Saints in Heaven, and his Militant Church here on Earth? They enjoy a perpetual Sunshine, we are allowed no more but Moon-light; We see, as it were, thro' a Glass, darkly; they face to face: Their Light, like that of the Sun, never lessens; ours, like that of the Moon, is sometimes greater, sometimes less, and sometimes we have none at all. How often doth the afflicted Believer walk in Darknes? God hides the Light of his Countenance from him, and he is troubled: Sometimes he is all Joy, by and by all Darknes again; sometimes he is like *St. Paul* wrapt up into the third Heaven; sometimes like Men that see God's Wonders in the Deep, he goes down again to the Depths, and his Soul melts because of Trouble; how clear are the Apprehensions sometimes he hath of the Love and Mercy of God! and seems to be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Depth and Breadth of the Love of God. How often, on the other Side, is a Veil drawn over all these bright Conceptions, and he grovelling in the Dust? What Floods of Consolation doth God sometimes pour upon his Soul? Whereas at other Times those Comforts come down in Drops, which used to come in showers; How great sometimes is his strength against Temptations? How weak is his Courage at another? How, like the great *Jesus*, can he sometimes rebuke the Winds and Waves, and make the Sea calm? and at another Time how ready he is to faint with
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the Disciples, and to look upon himself as lost! How chearfully sometimes can he cry out, *I can do all Things, through Christ who strengthens me?* How mournfully is he forced to express himself at another, *I see a Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin!*

Behold, O my Soul, the vast Number of the Stars and Lamps of Heaven, how wise, how powerful is that God who made them? Who can look upon those curious Lights, without admiring their Creator? Behold, they rise and go down at his Command, and do not fail one Minute of their appointed Time; How should this teach thee Obedience? How chearfully should'st thou run at the Command of thy God? These glorious Stars, though their Number be vastly great, yet they never clash or disagree one with another; How should this engage thee to unfeigned Charity, and Peaceableness? How should this put thee upon promoting Peace, and Concord, and Agreement among thy Neighbours? And do not these Stars put thee in Mind, how e'er long thou shalt shine as the Stars in the Firmament for ever? *Happy Hour! Blessed Day!* When thou shalt be clothed with Splendor, and Immortality, when thou shalt see Night no more, *and shalt need no Candle, neither Light of the Sun, but the Lord shall give thee Light, and thou shalt reign with him for ever.*

Come down lower, O my Soul, I have not done yet with God's wonderful Works; reflect upon the Air, in which all sensitive Crea-

tures breath; without this Air, the whole Creation would die; 'Tis this that keeps Men, and Beasts, and all Plants, and Herbs, alive; See how all Creatures, when ready to be smother'd, upon letting in of Air, do all revive and live again; and is not the holy Spirit of God, O my Soul, the very same to thee that the Air is to all Creatures? Without the Spirit of God to enlighten, to move, and to direct thee, thou hast the Name that thou livest, but thou art dead; 'tis the Spirit must give thee Life, 'tis he that must warm thee into a practical Love of God; 'tis he that must live in thee, that thou may'st not fulfil the Desires of the Flesh; 'tis he must teach thee how to pray; 'tis he must help thy Infirmities, and bear Witness with thy Spirit, that thou art a Child of God: Beg this rich Gift at the Hands of God, and thou shalt have it; seek it, and thou shalt find it; knock at Heaven Gate for it, and God will open, and grant thee thy Heart's Desire.

Behold, O my Soul, how vain and foolish those Men are, that will not believe the Being of Angels, or of Spirits, because they never saw any; Can they see the Air? And why do not they question, Whether there be such a Thing as Air or no. This Air supports all Creatures, so doth thy God much more. *He sends the Springs into the Valleys which run among the Hills: They give drink to every Beast of the Field, the wild Asses quench their Thirst. He watereth the Hills from his Chambers, the Earth is satisfied with the Fruits of his Works. He causes the Grass to grow for the Cattle, and Herbs for the Service of Men,* Psal. 104. 10, 11, 13, 14.

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When this Air yields to all gross Bodies, and lets them pass without Opposition, how doth it read to thee Lectures of Patience and Humility? In that Flexibility, thou mayest see the sinfulness of thy inexorable Temper, the Odiousness of thy revengeful Desires, and reviling again when thou art reviled, and giving the Offender as good as he brings; the Air reproves thee, when thou art deaf to all Intreaties to be reconciled to him that hath injured thee, when thou wilt not yield to the humble Supplication of distressed Creatures, and when thou opposest thy own Humour to all the rational Perswasions of wiser Men than thy self.

Look upon the Fire, O my Soul, and behold how differently it acts upon Bodies it meets withal, how it consumes the Hay and Stubble, and cleanses and purifies Gold and Silver: Dost thou not see here, as in a Glass, how thy God destroys the Workers of Iniquity; and advances, and increases, and purifies the Desires and Affections of a devout and religious Soul! Thou seest how hard and black Iron is, when it is not near the Fire, and how bright and tractable it becomes in the Fire, and is not this the true Picture of a Sinner? While he is a Stranger to the Law of God, he hardens his Heart as Flint and Adamant, no Threatnings pierce him, no Promises prevail with him, no Judgments fright him, no Providences move him, no Mercies melt him, he defies the whole Armour of God, and fighteth against him; his Sins stand stiff, his Lusts remain unshaken; he feeds upon God's Blessings as Swine do upon

without minding the Hand that throws them down; He hears Sermons, but they awake him not; He is intreated, but slights the Invitation; He is reprov'd, but laughs at the Reprehension; but when that holy Fire, the Love of God, enters into his Heart, how flexible, how tractable, doth he grow? How doth the Love of God constrain him to avoid sin, and to bid Defiance to all the Works of Darknes? He that before scorn'd to hear the glad Tidings of the Gospel, how doth he now submit to Christ's easie Yoke? He that before thought such a Duty unfit and improper for a Person of his Quality, how chearfully doth he now bow and yield to it? He that before had a thousand Excuses, why he could not do what Christ enjoins him, how doth he now lay all those idle Apologies by? He that before was churlish, becomes now affable and courteous: He that before was apt to be very angry at the least Affront, now bears it more quietly; He that before put off the Eternal God with the meanest of his Endeavours, now is willing to give him the fat and strength of his Affections: He that before could hear Ministers call to him, and call again without Effect, now cries out, *Sirs, What must I do to be saved?* He that before could not be perswaded to walk in the straight Way, now runs in the Way of God's Commandments. Blessed Fire, which, like the hallowed flames of Heaven, consumes not, but illuminates; Never suffers the Heart to be hardened, but purifies it; doth not straighten the Soul, but elevates it; doth not clog, but refine it; doth not con-

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found, but sublime it; destroys the Dross, but preserves the Gold; and burns away all unclean and inordinate Passions, and all immoderate Cares of this World, but raises the Soul above the World, and engages it to fly above those Things, which serve only to fill Mens Hearts with Anguish and Vexation.

Lay aside this Object for a little While, O my Soul, and look upon that Earth thou walkest on; this is the Place, our Bodies must necessarily rest in. But when thou seest the Centre of all heavy Bodies, forget not to think who it is, that is thy proper Centre and Resting-place; That's a Groaning, Bleeding, Dying Saviour. Think, O my Soul, on the Sensual and Luxurious Men of this World, what Pains they take to find out Rest for their Souls; like Spiders, they run from one Herb to another, and yet cannot purge their Poison, *i. e.* their Discontent, away; they give themselves to Wine, lay Hold on Folly, make them great Works, build them Houses, plant them Vineyards, make them Gardens and Orchards, and plant Trees in them of all Kind of Fruits; get them Servants and Maidens, procure ample Possessions of great and small Cattle; gather Silver and Gold, get them Men-fingers and Women-fingers, and all the Delights of the Sons of Men; and whatsoever their Eyes desire, they keep it not from them, *Eccles. 2. 3, 4, &c.* But when, with the *Sybarites*, they have rolled on Beds of Violets, and tossed their Fancies from one Pleasure to another, and come to stand on the Brink of another World, they find to their Sorrow, when

'tis too late, that here is not their Rest, and that their Souls can rest no Where but where infinite Satisfaction is to be had, even in God, blessed for evermore. God is thy Rest indeed, O my Soul ; and when thou canst hide thy self in the Wounds of thy great Redeemer, then, then thou art safe, and the Gates of Hell are not able to prevail against it.

Canst thou see how plentifully the Earth provides for Mankind, and forget what Provision God makes for thee that thou mayst not miss of the Crown of Righteousness hereafter ? And when thou seest how all Things the Earth produces, praise their Creator in their Way, and shew forth his Glory ; canst thou be silent, or forbear to be perpetually extolling the Goodness of that God, who hath given thee a Tongue on purpose to speak those Praises, whereof other Creatures make but a dumb shew ? Thou seest how this Earth produces Gold and Silver ; and how beautiful the Carpets are, on which it invites her Inhabitants to walk : And if this Earth be so glorious, what will Heaven be ? If the House which God vouchsafed to his Enemies be so splendid, what will his own Palace be, where none but himself and his Servants shall dwell for ever ? If the outward Court be so Magnificent, what must the Presence-Chamber of the King of kings be ? If Gold and Silver by their glittering dazzle the Eyes of Spectators here, what will the beatifical Presence of Almighty God do, which is beyond all the Shine and Lustre that Gold and precious Stones afford ?

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From the Earth, O my Soul, launch out into the Waters; how useful are the Lessons suggested to thee by this Element? Canst thou look upon Water, and not reflect on the Grace of God, which hath appeared to all Men? How this washes the Souls of Believers from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit; how it quenches the Fire of sinful Lusts in Men; how it takes away Mens Thirst, and Greediness, after the sublunary Comforts; how it cools the Soul under the greatest Heat of Misery; how it makes many of one Mind, as the innumerable Atomes of Flower go together in Water, to make up one Loaf of Bread, and unites Millions of Men, under one Head, the Lord *Jesus Christ*. Behold the Springs and Fountains, which, like Pearls, adorn the curious Fabrick of the Earth; canst thou call them Fountains, and doth not that Name put thee in mind of the Fountain of Life, the Fountain of Wisdom, the Fountain of Living Waters, and the Fountain opened for the House of *Judab* and *Jerusalem*, for Sin and for Uncleaness? Do but think what Riches flow from that everlasting Spring! Thy God is the very Fountain of all Beings: In him, and to him, and through him, are all things; he depends on no Causes, he hath need of no Assistance, nothing can hurt him, but all things depend upon him; He is the Beginning of all things without a Beginning, the End without End; the great Cause without a Cause; Infinite, Unlimited, Immense and Incomprehensible; Refresh thy self, O my Soul, in this never-failing and inexhaustible Fountain; Admire him, Serve him, Love him, Desire him, despise all

other Things in comparison of him, for he alone can supply all thy Wants and Necessities, content thy Affections here, and fill thee with everlasting Comfort hereafter.

III. It wonderfully supports Men under Afflictions, for our Impatience lies in our Minds, and where the Disease begins, there 'tis fit the Cure should begin; but, which Way should the Mind be cur'd but by Consideration? 'Tis this must answer all the Objections that Flesh and Blood suggest to the Mind; 'Tis this must silence all the Arguments, which seem to justify our Murmurs against the disinal Providence we meet withal, and the Thoughts which cause our Discontent must be expelled by Thoughts of our Demerits, and God's Justice; and without all Peradventure, that Man shall be able to bear his Tribulation better, that *thus* reasons the Case with himself, Why art thou cast down O my Soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hath thy God a Hand in this Affliction, or hath he not? If he hath not, Where is his Providence? If he hath, Why dost thou grumble? Doth not thy God know better, what is expedient for thee, than thy self? Is he All-wise, and doth not he know what Medicines are fittest for thee? Thou art his Creature, and may not he do with his own what he pleases? Thou hast sinned against him, and must not he correct thee? Thou hast affronted him, and must not he use his Rod? Thou hast forsaken him, and must not he shew his Displeasure against thy Ingratitude? Dost not thou correct thy Child when he is stubborn? And dost thou let thy

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Servant go without chiding, that doth neglect the Business thou hast recommended to his Care? May be, thou hast served thy God, and led a sober Life; but, was it a Life so blameless, that it had no Defects? And must not those Defects endure that fiery Trial, that they may be burnt away? Hast thou received the Good at the Hand of the Lord, and shalt not thou receive the Evil also? How long hath God spared thee, who might long ago have poured out the Vials of his Wrath upon thee? Hast not thou Reason to thank him for chastising thee but now, who might have done it much sooner? Alas! Why shouldst thou think he doth thee Wrong, by sending this Cross upon thee, who hast deserved no less than Damnation? Are not Rods gentler than Scorpions? And Drops of God's Anger more tolerable than Floods of his Displeasure? Thou art in pain; but what is this to Hell-fire? Thou art in Torment; but what is this to the Agonies the unhappy Spirits in the burning Lake endure? How great a Mercy is it, that it is not worse with thee? The Waters of *Morab*, which are but to the Ankles now, How soon might God increase them to the Knees, and make them a *River that could not be passed over*? And he that doth but frown now, How easily might he Thunder? Consider, O my Soul, thou art not called to Persecution, to Gibbets, to Fire, to the Sword, to Grid-irons, to wild Beasts, as the Martyrs of old were: If thou complaineest now, What wouldst thou do, if thou wert call'd to Martyrdom? Look upon *Jesus*, the Author, and Captain of thy Salvation, who was made perfect thro' Sufferings:

ferings: Art thou better than the Son of God? Look upon the Apostles, look upon the Primitive Saints that were torn asunder, stoned, slain with the Sword, wandred about in Sheep-skins, and Goat-skins, were destitute, tormented, afflicted; and art thou a greater Saint than they? Why shouldst thou expect better Dealing at God's Hands, than they? Thou art not alone in Misery; thou hast whole Armies of Holy Men to bear thee Company: Canst thou look upon yonder Heaven, and repine? Canst thou behold that Glory, which God hath prepared for thee, and think much of these fiery Trials? The Hopes of a Kingdom makes a Captive Prince merry, though he is in Prison; and shall not the Hopes of yonder Joys keep thy Heart from sinking? When a *Socrates* can chearfully submit to the unjust Sentence of the *Athenians*, upon no other Account but this, because it was God's Will! Shalt thou, who art a Christian, lie fretting at thy Trouble, as if thou meantst to resist and controul God's Will? Wilt not thou give God Leave to use that Privilege in this great House, the World, which every Peasant uses in his Cottage, and lay what Burthens he pleases on his Servants? Shall he say, suffer thou this Affliction; and wilt thou answer with that ill-natured Son in the Gospel, *I will not*? Look, O my Soul, look upon the Benefit thou wilt receive by this Providence; thou wast proud before, stay a While, and this Calamity will make thee humble; Thou didst despise thy God before, have a little Patience, and this Trouble will drive thee hence to thy Father's House;

House ; Thou didst play with the Bread thy Father gave thee, this Cross will teach thee how to prize it ; Thou didst trust too much to thine own strength, this Calamity will make thee rely altogether upon him, who hath promised to be thy Refuge, thy Hiding-place, thy Fortrefs, thy Deliverer, thy strong Tower, and the Horn of thy Salvation : God knows what thou wantest, and how thy Wants must be supplied ; He sees Prosperity would undo thee ; He therefore takes it away, and like a tender Father, cries, *Do thy self no Harm* : He sees such a Blessing would make thee surfeit, he therefore wisely prevents thy Disease, by depriving thee of that Mercy : He sees such a Comfort would be but a Knife, or Sword in thy Hand, and kill thee ; he therefore snatches it away, because he would preserve thee from eternal Ruin : He sees thou art too much in love with this World, he therefore embitters thy sweet Morsels, to make thee weary of this barren Wilderness, and in love with that Kingdom that fades not away. Dost thou blame a Physician, because he gives his Patient a bitter Potion ? And, Wilt thou blame thy God, for not pleasuring thy Palate with Dainties which would increase thy Distemper ? Wouldst thou follow thy Saviour in Sun-shine only, and not go with him into the Garden of *Gethsemane* ? Wouldst thou inherit his Crown of Glory, without wearing his Crown of Thorns here ? Wouldst thou be with him on Mount *Tabor* only, and not accompany him to *Golgotha* ? Wouldst thou be about him only, when he *Rides in triumph* into *Jerusalem*,
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and forsake him in the Desert? Wouldst thou follow him only while the *Loaves do last*, and abandon him when *he wants Bread* for the Multitude? Wouldst thou own him only when Men cry *Hosanna*, and run away from him, when they cry out *Crucifie him*? Wilt thou eat of the same *Bread* he doth, and not drink of his *Cup* too? God would save thee by that Burthen which lies upon thee; And dost thou prefer a little Froth before an eternal Weight of Blessedness? Hadst thou rather enjoy thy good 'Things here, than lie with *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* Bosom? God sees thou canst not be happy without this Affliction; and wilt thou prefer living deliciously for a few Days, before the rich Banquet God hath prepared for his Favourites in *Paradise*? O my Soul, 'tis but a little While yet, and thy Prison will be changed into a Palace, thy Poverty into Eternal Riches, thy Bondage into perfect Liberty, thy Persecution into endless Joys, thy Mourning Songs into Hallelujahs, thy Sorrow into Rivers of Delight. Alas! What is a Prison? God's Presence can make it a Heaven? Walls cannot keep out the Smiles and Glory of the Highest. What is Poverty? It may consist with being God's Jewel; and he that hath nothing in this World to boast of, may have an incorruptible Crown to lay hold of, and be really richer than the wealthiest of Mankind. What are Slanders and Reproaches? They cannot hurt the Soul, whatever Injury they may do the Body; they come sometimes from Man, whose Tongue is no Slander; and, while thou art innocent in
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the sight of God, thou art *a Crown of Glory in the Hand of the Lord, and a Royal Diadem in the Hand of thy God*; and if so, how little need'st thou matter the good Opinion and Esteem of Men, especially when thy innocence shall be proclaim'd one Day in the Ears of the whole World? What is Persecution? A Cloud which soon passes away, and he that chearfully endures it, great is his Reward in Heaven. Despair not, O my Soul, thou hast to deal with a God, who will lay no more upon thee than thou art able to bear, but with the Temptation will make thee a Way to escape, that thou may'st be able to bear it; one that doth not afflict the Children of Men willingly; One that will certainly, if thou obstruct not his Operation by thy Unbelief, so order thy *Winter*, that a most glorious *Spring* and *Summer* shall follow it.

May be thy Troubles are altogether Spiritual, and thou dost not complain so much, because thou art destitute of outward Conveniencies, as because thy God is departed from thee: A deep Sense of thy Sins afflicts thee, thou see'st the Wrath of God hovering over thee, and God hides his Face from thee; thou art afraid thou dost not belong to him; thou see'st not thy former Tokens, nor feelest those gracious Influences, which formerly watered and enriched all thy Faculties: But hast thou such low conceits of the everlasting Kindness of thy God, O my Soul! Why shouldst thou believe he hath forsaken thee, when he doth give thee daily Testimonies of his Love? What greater Assurance canst thou have of God's Love to thee, and of
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Christ's kind Thoughts towards thee, than thy Weariness of Sin? Hast not thou heard thy Saviour call, *Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give ye Rest?* Art not thou weary of Iniquity? Hadst not thou rather be rid of that Burthen than keep it? If thou art not heartily resolved to part with it, why dost thou complain? What makes thee cry out, *O wretched Creature that I am, Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* What makes thee wish, that what thou hast done against God, were undone? What makes thee afraid of offending God? Why dost thou weep? Why dost thou watch against thy Corruptions? What makes thee angry with thy self for displeasing God? What makes thee breathe and pant after Christ, as the wounded Heart pants after the Water Brooks? What makes Christ so sweet, and Sin so bitter to thee? What makes thee ashamed of looking up to Heaven? Whence is it, that all the Preferment and Riches of this World cannot tempt thee to sin wilfully? Whence is it that thou delightest not in the Company of Sinners, but thy Delight is chiefly in them that fear the Lord? If these be not signs of Grace, what Character of Mercy wouldst thou have? Hath not thy God said, *that he'll love those that do love him?* If thou lovest him not, why art thou restless till thou enjoyest him? If thou lovest him not, why dost thou desire him? Why art thou willing to follow him through Misery, and the greatest Troubles, to be for ever with him? Thou hast Infirmities to wrestle withal, but hath not thy God promised

mised thee, that he'll bruise Satan under thy Feet shortly? Thou canst not totally master such a Corruption, but dost not thou fight against it? Thou meetest with Temptations, but dost not thou grapple with them? Satan follows thee, but dost not thou resist him? Thy Conscience terrifies thee, but hast not thou the Cross of Christ to flie to? If God had a mind to kill thee, would he have shewn thee all these Things? If God were gone from thee, would not his Spirit be gone too? If thou hast not the Spirit of God, what mean thy Longings after God? What means thy Love to a Spiritual Life? Why dost thou pray so earnestly for the Fruit of the Spirit? Why art thou altogether for a clean Heart, and for renewing of a right Spirit within thee? Are they not the Signs of God's Spirit, that warms thy Affections, and makes Intercession for thee with Groanings that cannot be utter'd? God seems to go away, that thou may'st cry more earnestly after him, and clouds his Comforts, that thou may'st sue for them with greater Importunity; He lets thee sink a little, that thou may'st cry with a louder Voice, *Lord save me, or else I perish*; And falls asleep in the Ship, that thou may'st take the greater Pains to wake him. He sees thou growest weary of his Favour, he therefore darkens it, that thou may'st be at some Trouble to recover it, and having recovered it, set a greater Price upon it; he withdraws himself for a While, that at his Return thy Joy may be fuller; and bids his gracious Influences stop a While, that when they flow in upon thee again, they may

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fill all thy Faculties with greater Gladness; thou canst not perform thy Duties with that Alacrity and Chearfulness thou desirest, but hast not thou Reason to bless God, that thou dost in good earnest desire to do better? Was Heaven purchased in a Moment, or sin conquered in an Hour? Is not the Way to Life a Race, where Men must run on till they reach the Mark? Go on, O my Soul, go on; the farther thou proceededst in God's Ways, the sweeter thou wilt find them; The more thou strivest, the more thou'lt conquer; and the oftner thou dost address thy self to God, the more thy Dulness and Weariness will vanish; and the more thou lookest upon the everlasting Recompence, the greater mind thou wilt have to go on from Strength to Strength. O my Soul, hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my Countenance, and my God.

IV. *It disposes a Man to be a worthy Receiver of the Lord's Supper.* Indeed I do not see, how, without it, a Man can receive any Benefit by that Blessed Sacrament; for it being an Ordinance designed chiefly to impregnate the Soul with very strong longings and breathings after a Crucified Saviour, with a deep Sense of the incomprehensible Love of God in Christ Jesus, and with earnest Resolutions to Love and Obey him, before all the Dictates of Flesh and Blood, and of our carnal Interest, it is not to be conceived, which Way the Soul shall arrive to all this, without considering the End, Nature, and Advantages of this

this Sacrament; and 'tis probable, a Man may then be affected with this sublime Mystery, when he rouzes his Soul some such Way as this, Dost thou rightly understand, O my Soul, what this great and tremendous Ordinance means? Behold, thou art going to feast with that God, *who stretches out the Heavens like a Curtain, and lays the Beams of his Chambers in the Waters, and makes the Clouds his Chariots, and rideth upon the Wings of the Wind.* What, Feast with so glorious a God, and come without a Wedding-Garment? Sup with him, who dwelleth in the Heavens, and not *purifie thy self, even as he is pure?* Can Two walk together except they be agreed? What Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? And what Communion hath Light with Darknes? What Concord hath Christ with *Belial?* What Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? This is the great Ordinance, O my Soul, which must either promote thy everlasting Happiness, or aggravate thy Everlasting Condemnation; How happy may'st thou be, if this Sacrament charms thee into a fervent Love to thy dear Redeemer? But how wilt thou escape, if thou neglect so great Salvation? Here are the greatest Engagements, the greatest motives to a Life, as becomes the Gospel of Christ, here God adjures thee (to use the Words of the Church) *by Christ's Agony and Bloody Sweat, by his Cross and Passion, by his Death and Burial,* to bury thy unclean Desires, and inordinate Affections, and to dedicate thy self, and all thou hast, to his Service. Here is represented the greatest Love that ever was

vouchsafed to Men; Here the Son of God appears all bloody to fright thee from thy Sins; here Christ is, as it were, Crucified before thine Eyes, that remembring what it was that brought him to his Cross, *thou may'st mourn, as one that mourns for his only Son.* Here Christ appears laden with all the Blessings of Heaven; here the everlasting Trinity seems to use its utmost Endeavours to persuade thee into a Heavenly Conversation: Here the Desert of sin is discovered in the Wounds and Torments of an infinite God; and hither thou comest, O my Soul, to renew thy Baptifimal Vow; hither thou comest to enter into a solemn Covenant with God, and faithfully to promise him to resign thy self entirely to him; to fall out with him no more, to defile thy Garments no more; to dishonour, to betray him no more; to be faithful to him, to vindicate his Glory, to esteem his Friends as thy Friends, and his Enemies as thy Enemies, and to live up to those Laws which he hath seal'd with his own Blood: To this end thou eatest of his Bread, and drinkest of his Wine; and thus thou sealest the Covenant. Dost not thou remember, O my Soul, how the World was lost by eating of the forbidden Tree? Behold, by eating of this Tree of Life, thou shalt be saved for ever: In the breaking of the *Consecrated Bread*, thou seest, how Christ's Body was broken for thee; in pouring out of the *Hallow'd Wine*, thou seest, how Christ's Blood was spilt for thee: When the Holy Bread is reach'd out to thee, thou seest Christ reaching out his Crucified Body to thee,

thee, that thou may'st see in his Hands the *print of the Nails*, and put thy finger into the *print of his Nails*, and thrust *thine hand into his Side*, and shelter thy self under that wounded and mangled Body, against the Wrath and Indignation of God. When the Sacred Wine is given thee, thou seest how Christ offers thee his Blood for the Remission of thy sins. Canst thou behold so great Love, and not lose thy Reason in the Admiration of its greatness? When thou seest such Condescension, such Kindness, such Compassion, O canst thou forbear crying out, O my Lord! what do I see? What mean these Longings of Almighty God after my Happiness? What means this Industry of that incomprehensible Being, to be at all this charge and pains to make me blessed? God that might sport himself with my everlasting Groans, what needed he have cared whether I were saved or no? God, who can be happy without company, and needs no society but his own; Whence is it, that this mighty God humbles himself thus to Dust and Ashes, lays aside his Robes of Glory, and wooes me to be content to lie for ever in his Arms and Bosom? Would no other remedy serve Turn to recover me, but the death of the Son of God? God, on whose Laws I have trampled, whose Authority I have slighted, whose promises and threatnings I have undervalued, that he should be thus concern'd for my Welfare, and contrive how to advance me unto Glory, and contrive it by such stupendious means too! Will God suffer, that I may not? Will the Eternal die, that I may not fall a prey to the second death? Will God be crown'd

with Thorns, that I may wear an incorruptible Crown of Glory? Will God be affronted, abused and scorned, that I may inherit Glory and Honour, and immortality? What manner of Love is this? Where is the Spring of it? What's the impulsive cause of it? How full of Miracles is every circumstance here? How pleasant is this Contemplation? What! God love a little slime and earth? O my God! how wonderful is thy Love? It is all Ocean; here is no shore to set my feet on! Be astonished at it, O ye Heavens, and tremble, O thou Earth: The eternal, the immense Creator of Heaven and Earth, stoops to a miserable Creature! The God, who fills Heaven and Earth with his Presence, bows down to a poor inconsiderable Worm! He that sits on the Circle of the Earth, and before whom all the Inhabitants of the Earth are as Grasshoppers, humbles himself to take notice of a poor forlorn Wretch! Here is Love indeed. *Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with Apples*; my head grows giddy with the Precipice: Here is an Abyfs of Love, which I cannot fathom; my head swims at the sight of it; Sense can furnish me with nothing like it, I am silenc'd; here is a Love answers all Arguments that are brought for going on in sin. Help me, O thou blessed Spirit; help me, O thou, who art fairer than the Children of Men; help me, thou who art all Love and Life, help me to admire thy Love. In this Love are a thousand Charms; in this Love are omnipotent Enforcives to love God above all the World. Run, O my Soul, run into this Banqueting-house, the Banner whereof is Love. Is it so, and must thou have
perished,

perished, and been undone for ever, if the Son of God had not come in the flesh, and expiated thy Crimes, and doth not Almighty Love deserve thy Love? See how the Ambitious love the Applause of Men, and wilt not thou love him who is brighter than the Sun? See how the Rich Man is enamoured with his stately Palace, and canst not thou love him, who hath done that for thee, which no Friend, no Money, no Gold, no Silver could have purchased, *viz.* Reconciling thee to an offended God? Wilt thou slight this Love, and hope to be unpunish'd? Wilt thou make this Love a Refuge for wilful Sins, and hope for the Light of Christ's Countenance? Will not he, who loved thee beyond all Precedents and Examples, double and treble his Indignation upon thee, if this Love cannot melt thee into a truly Spiritual Life? Could the Devils have but such an offer, of being partakers of the Love of Christ, how would they rejoyce and triumph, and love, and honour, and obey their God again, as once they did when they were Inhabitants of Heaven! and wilt thou be worse than a Devil, and spurn at that Love which Angels stand astonished at? Were it thine own Case, O my Soul; wouldst not thou revenge such Ingratitude with all the severity imaginable, and doom the Wretch that should affront such Condescension, to the direct Flames? Be wise, O my Soul, and provoke not that God to swear in his Wrath, That thou shalt never enter into his Rest, who flees unto thee on the Wings of Mercy to embrace thee; Thou canst never have a more glorious sight of God's Love, on this side Heaven,

than is discovered to thee in this Sacrament; and if ever thou wouldst be perswaded to resign thyself entirely to thy blessed Redeemer, make his Will thy Will, and desire what he desires, and hate what he hates, and love what he loves. O come hither to the Cross, and see the Son of God weeping for thy sins; come hither, and see him sweat drops of Blood for thy Iniquities, and offering thee Pardon and Reconciliation, and Peace with God, and Access to the Throne of Grace, and Union and Communion with him; and if this be not enough, a Title to eternal Happiness, or a Right to that Throne himself doth sit on.

But why so backward, O my Soul, to come to the Table of thy Lord, where thou mayest drink Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price; where thou mayest be satisfied as with Marrow and Fatness, and eat of the living Bread, whereof whoever eats shall live for ever? Hast thou forgot the peremptory Command of Christ, *Do this in remembrance of me?* Is this remembering thy dearest Friend, to think of him solemnly but once or twice a Year? Shouldst not thou remember him as often as thou hast an Opportunity? Should thy Saviour remember thee no oftner than thou dost his Death and Passion, how fearful would thy Condition be? Canst thou represent his Love too often to thy Mind and Affections? Canst thou remember thy Sins, that brought him to the Cross, too often? Art thou afraid of thinking too much of this Love, and consequently of being too Religious? Art thou afraid of being

too much enamoured with this Jesus? Art thou afraid, That the sight of his broken Body will break thy Heart too much? Art thou afraid, That the sight of his effused Blood will make thee pour out too many Tears, and Prayers, and Praises of his Love? Considering how dull, how dead thou art, thou hadst need come frequently to the Cross, to have thy Affections suppled and softened with this precious Blood: How frail is thy memory, and is it not fit thou shouldst refresh it often with the sight of Christ's incomprehensible Love? Art thou afraid of renewing thy Repentance, thy Faith, thy Hope, thy Charity too often? The oftner thou dost resort to this blessed Communion, the greater will be thy Acquaintance with thy best of Friends; the greater sense thou wilt get of the need and want of him, the greater encouragement thou wilt find to imitate him in his Holiness, Meekness, Patience, and Humility; and the greater assurance thou wilt get of his Love, and Favour, and Pardon, and everlasting Mercy: And are these Blessings to be scorned and undervalued? Thou pretendest want of preparation, but whose Fault is it that thou art not prepared? What can hinder thee from preparation, but Love to sin? And shall Love to a sensual careless Life hinder thee from laying hold of the greatest Treasure? Will this plea hold, when thou shalt appear before the great Tribunal? O my Soul, this is to excuse sin by sin, and to despise God's Ordinance, because thou despisest his Commands; and how will this aggravate thy folly one Day, and fill thee with shame and horror! O play not with everlasting Mercy,

let not Business hinder thee from advancing thy Spiritual and Eternal Interest; remember what became of the Men that pretended they had Farms to see, and Oxen to try, and Wives to marry, when they were invited to the Supper of the Lamb; canst thou think of the Protestation of the Master of the Feast against these stubborn Wretches, and not conclude thy Fate, by their being excluded from God's Favour for ever? If it be a Sense of thy own Vileness and Unworthiness that keeps thee away, thou mistakest and misrepresentest the Goodness of thy Lord and Master. No Persons more welcome at his Table than the humble and broken-hearted; none meet with a more favourable Reception than the poor in Spirit; These the crucified Jesus prays for on his Cross, *Father forgive them*; and the everlasting Father hears, and saith to them, *Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.*

V. *It prepares a Man for an Evangelical Life here on Earth*; for he that frequently considers and contemplates the Joys, the Triumphs, the Scepters, the Crowns, the Diadems of yonder Kingdom, the everlasting Love, and Peace and Satisfaction, which Angels and glorified Saints enjoy, cannot but think himself, during that Consideration, in Heaven, and participating of that content and happiness, which is possessed by the general Assembly of the First-born which are written in Heaven. Indeed, this is to make Earth a Heaven, and to change this Wilderness into a Paradise, a Closet into the Seat of Glory, and a Desert into those Regions of Bliss and Happiness.

How

How like an Angel may that Man live, that is often engaged in such Considerations as these. Heaven! what do I hear? Heaven! The Harbour of all laden and wearied Souls! Heaven! The end of all my sorrow and miseries! Heaven! The Port I have been sailing to these many Years! Heaven! The Inheritance of those that keep themselves unspotted from the World! Heaven! the Rest of God's Servants, and the habitation of the Mourners in *Sion*! Heaven! The great mark of my Desires, the Anchor of my Hope, the Foundation of my Confidence! Heaven! The University, where we shall know even as we are known! How undisturbed, how quiet, do all the Inhabitants of those blessed Mansions live! There rest those Saints who were made as the filth of the World, and as the off-scouring of all Things. How different are the Thoughts of God from those of the World? These Men the World regarded not, behold God remembers them, and when he makes up his Jewels, spares them, as a Man would spare his own Son that serves him! There rests that *Mary Magdalen*, that stood behind Christ at his feet, weeping, and washing his Feet with her Tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kiss'd them, and anointed his Head with Ointment. There rests that *Lazarus*, who desired to be fed with the Crumbs that fell from the Rich Man's Table. There rests that *David*, that made his Bed to swim, and watered his Couch with his Tears. There rests all the Prophets of old, who *through Faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained Promises, stopped the*
Mouths

Mouths of Lions, quenched the Violence of the Fire, escaped the Edge of the Sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the Armies of the Aliens. The Rest of all those Souls that looked for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of their Saviour Jesus Christ. The Rest of those Martyrs and Confessors, that were ready, not only to suffer, but to die also, for the Name of the Lord Jesus. There they rest, encircled with an eternal Calm. There they rest, incompassed with an innumerable Company of Angels. There they rest, surrounded with the Gracious Presence of a merciful God. There they rest from all the calumnies and slanders of this poor envious World. There they rest from all Darkness, in eternal Light, and in the Beams of the Sun of Righteousness, for ever.

Awake, O my Soul, awake, advance into yonder Regions of Glory, retire into yonder Paradise, leave this World, and go higher; let thy Thoughts transcend the Sun, and Moon, and Stars; get before the Throne of God; take a view of the still Waters, whereof the vast Armies of glorified Spirits drink; where they are, there are no Wolves, no Tygers, no Bears, no Lions, as in this barren Wilderness; in those happy shades is no Noise but that of *Hallelujahs*; no Discontent, no War, no Dissentions inhabit there; there all agree, there *Ephraim* is no more against *Manasseh*, nor *Manasseh* against *Ephraim*, nor they both against *Judah*, but all are delighted with the everlasting Glory and Love of God; there

there they hunger and thirst no more. Wonderful Change! Here, O my Soul, thou art ever thirsting after God, as the dry Land thirsteth after Water; there thou shalt be satisfied with him to all Eternity; here thou lonigest after the hidden *Manna*, there it will never be taken from thee; here, like *Solomon's* Bride, by night on thy Bed thou seek'st him, who is altogether lovely; there his Beauty and Presence will ravish thee for ever. Here, though thy desires after the Blessings of God's left hand, be subordinate to thy desires after spiritual Mercies, and thy esteem of God preponderates, and is higher than thy Esteem of any outward felicities; yet, while so nearly allied to Sense, thou canst not so abandon Nature, as to have no Longings at all after external Comforts and Conveniences; but in Heaven, all perishing sublunary Objects are forgotten; there those Friends and Relations, those Children, those Honours, those Riches, which too often made too great an encroachment on thy Love, will be no Attractives; there thou wilt be contented without Bread, satisfied without Drink; the Want of Cloaths will not trouble thee; thou wilt have nobler Friends than Father, and Mother, and Brethren and Sisters to converse withal; nobler Food, than the delicacies of this World; nobler attire, than Silk, or the softest Down can make; there will be no Need of contriving how to get a Livelihood: Palaces will not tempt thee, Gardens will not entice thee, Gold will not dazzle thee, the greatness of the World will affect thee no more than Pebbles; the glittering Diamond will make no Impressions on thee, and all thy Wants

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and necessities will be fully supplied by an immortality of Joy, and Glory. Here the warm Sun of Prosperity makes thee sometimes forget, and neglect the great Work of thy Salvation, makes thee apt to grow weary of Fasting and Prayer, and Mortification, and Self-denial, and apt to yield unto Satan's Temptations; But there the Tempter must tempt thee no more, he dares not follow those Christalline walks with his steps, he dares not come near that Holy place, 'tis past his skill, how to incommode, or molest a glorified Spirit. Here often, like *Jonas*, thou sittest rejoicing under thy Gourd and Vine, and while thou art solacing thy self, the Gourd withers, and the Sun scorches thy Body, and thou growest faint; there this annoyance will have an end, there thou wilt live above the Sun, and that which is now thy Cieling, shall be then thy Footstool. On Earth, when *Christ* is pleased to communicate himself unto thee, 'tis *here a little*, and *there a little*, and he gave thee but Sprinklings of his Grace; for while thou art in this Tabernacle of Flesh, thou art not capacious enough to receive or entertain that stupendious Light in its full Virtue, and Power, and Majesty; But when thy Vessel of Clay, thy Body, shall be shattered in Dust and Atomes, and thou shalt be freed from thy Prison, and live like thy self, all Understanding, all Intellect, all Spirit, the Sun that shines in the highest Heavens, and irradiates the Throne of God, even the Lord *Jesus Christ*, will then reveal himself to thee, in his full Splendor and Glory; Thine Eyes shall then be strong enough to look upon that
glo-

glorious and immense Globe of Light, and thou shalt be like unto the Angels of God; thy extravagant passions will then cease for ever; thy grief, thy sorrows, will have no admittance into those Seats of Bliss, thou'lt be refined then from all those turbulent motions, which do now so often discompose thy rest. Here the Death of a near Relation troubles thee, there thou wilt be above all trouble and vexation; here thine Anger, like that of *Moses*, doth often wax hot, because thou seest thy God dishonoured, and his Commands trampled upon? there thou wilt see no such dismal sights; here a sin thou fall'st into against thy will, makes thee wish for Rivers of Tears, there thy grief will be buried in eternal Exultations, there thy passions will be all calm, and, like water after a storm, look smooth and quiet; there will be no disorder in thy Affections, but like a Choir of tuneable Voices, they'll meet in everlasting Harmony; there no Affliction must come after thee. Here, with *Moses*, thy Body may be thrown into the Water, with *Joseph* cast into Prison, with *Shadrack*, *Mesheck*, and *Abednego*, flung into a fiery Furnace, with *Daniel* hurried into a Lion's Den, stoned with the Prophets, crucified with *St. Peter*, thrown down from a Precipice with *St. James*, cast into a Kettle of boiling Oil with *St. John*, thrust through with a Launce as *St. Thomas*, bound to a Tree with *St. Andrew*, fley'd with *St. Bartholomew*, burnt with *Polycarp*, torn by wild Beasts with *Ignatius*, in all which Afflictions thou canst not but sympathize with thy individual Companion, for it is by thee that thy Body feels the Torments it en-

dures;

dures; but, in that Heaven, that glorious Heaven, no Enemy can reach thee; no Devil fright thee, no storm surprize thee, no Monarch frown on thee, no sickness break thee, no Distemper crush thee, no Age waste thee, no Danger shake thee, no Tyrant threaten thee, no Lyons meet thee, no Tyger tear thee, no Sword pierce thee, no publick Commotions startle thee; The Sun shall not light on thee, nor any Heat, for thou art secure under the shadow of the Almighty's Wings for ever. The Lamb, which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed thee by his everlasting Society. Here it is, *A little while, and you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me;* but there, with open face, and without a Glass, thou wilt look upon his Majesty for ever: Here *Christ* comes and departs; there he will never remove out of thy sight; There his everlasting Love will support thee, There his kindness will be subject to Clouds and Eclipses no more, There thou wilt not be able to turn thy Eyes away from him. This is that Lamb, that will give thee to drink of his everlasting Springs, Springs which can never be drawn dry; Springs, which can no more decay, than the Son of God decays; He is the everlasting Fountain of Delight, and in this Fountain thou shalt bathe and recreate thy self for ever; his Attributes, his Kingdom, his Beauty, shall charm and ravish thee for ever; There thou shalt be in an everlasting Extasie of Joy, There thou wilt not need to cry out with St. Bernard, *Hold, Lord, for my Heart is not able to contain those Joys which thou dost so liberally pour out upon*

me;

me; That everlasting Fountain of joy and content and satisfaction, shall both fill and enable thee to bear that fulness of joy and delight, which shall then appear unto thee; the Remembrance of *Christ's* Merits and Benefits, and what *Christ* had done for thee, will then transport thee into everlasting Praises and Celebrations of his Goodness, Songs as endless as thy duration will be. The Rivers that water that Garden of God shall be a *perpetuum mobile*, running and flowing to all Eternity. In this Paradise are living, no standing Waters; When Millions of Ages are past, thy Glory shall be still green and lively, and after many Thousands of Years, thy happiness, like *Aaron's* Rod, shall bud and blossom, and bear Fruit. O my Soul, when that inexhaustible Fountain fades, and not till then, needest thou be afraid that thy Delights will fade; there God will put an end to all thy Tears; What Rhetorick can reach the Favour? The Tears thou didst shed for sin, the Tears which a deep Sense of thy Spiritual Poverty did force from thee, the Tears which Tribulation and Anguish did command from thine Eyes, these will all then be washed away.

How amiable are thy Tabernacles, Lord God of Hosts! My Soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the Courts of the Lord: My heart and my flesh cryeth out for the Living God, When shall I come to appear before thee? When shall I shake off this Clog of the flesh, and praise thee day and night in thy Temple? When shall I be freed from this Earth and Dross, and do thy Will, O my God, without Let or Interruption?

O my Soul ! Dost thou believe such a Heaven, where no Good shall be absent, and canst thou be hunting after the husks and empty shells of sensual Pleasure? How little do the Inhabitants of that *New Jerusalem* mind the Pomp and Grandeur of this World? They have nobler Objects to mind, and more delightful Employments to take up their minds and thoughts: Didst thou live more in this Heaven, O my Soul, how wouldst thou look down upon this Earth, as an inconsiderate Trifle? How little wouldst thou regard what Man can do unto thee? How contentedly mightest thou part with all that the World counts dear and precious for *Christ* his Sake, as knowing that there is laid up for thee the Crown of Righteousness, which the Righteous Judge will give to thee one Day, and not only to thee, but to all those that love his Appearance? Look upon the Primitive Martyrs, O my Soul, they broiled in Flames, but looked upon that Heaven and smiled. *St. Stephen* had a Thousand stones flying about his Ears, but looks upon that Heaven, and the Glory of God appears upon his Face. *Abraham* sojourns in the Land of Promise, as in a strange Country, dwelling in Tabernacles with *Isaac* and *Jacob*, but looks for a City which hath Foundations, and goes on triumphing. *Moses* suffers Affliction with the People of God, but hath Respect unto the Remembrance of Reward, and esteems the Reproach of *Christ* greater Riches than all the Treasures of *Egypt*. The Apostles are scourged and beaten for the Testimony of *Jesus*, but looked upon this
Heaven,

Heaven, and depart from the Council rejoicing, because they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of the Lord *Jesus*. *St. Paul* five times of the *Jesus* receives forty Stripes save one, Thrice is he beaten with Rods, once he is stoned, Thrice he suffers Shipwrack, a Night and a Day he is in the Deep, in Journeyings often, in cold and nakedness; but, What ails the Man? He sings, his Heart dances for Joy under all these Troubles. O my Soul, he saw, he saw, That his light Affliction, which was but for a Moment, would work for him a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.

O my God, give me but my Portion in this Heaven, and I desire no more; Come what will come, Sword, Fire, Imprisonment, Hunger, Thirst, Nakedness, Disgrace, Reproach, Perils by Sea, and Perils by Land, Enemies, Devils, Fiends, Poverty, Sickness, Exile, &c. Here is a Jewel will counterballance all. O give me but a Room in that great House, made without Hands, Eternal in the Heavens, and then cut, burn, torture and afflict me, let Storms and Tempests come, I'll fight against them with my Title to that Inheritance, which fades not away: This shall quench all the fiery Darts of the Devil, This shall bear up my Head above Water, This shall hush all my discontented Thoughts; This shall be my Refuge in a Storm, my Hiding-place in Flames, my Portion in Poverty, my Pillow in great Anguish, my Liberty in Prison, my Cordial in Temptations, my Elixir in a Swoon, my Prop when I stumble, my Laurel when it thunders, my Rock in Persecution,

my Safeguard in Destruction, my Light in the midst of Darkneſs, my *Goshen* in this *Egypt*, my Ship under the fierceſt Billows, my Shield when I am aſſaulted, my Helmet when I am in danger, my Encouragement when I do reſiſt, my Crown when I conquer, my *Manna* in the Wilderneſs, my Food in the Deſart, my Roſe to ſmell to in a Dungeon, my Guide in my Journey, my Poleſtar in my Voyage, my Staff in my Pilgrimage, my Song in my Miſery, my All, when Death and Hell conſpire into my Ruin.

VI. *It makes a Man prudent and diſcreet in ſecular Affairs and Buſineſs.* Conſideration, as it is a very great Improvement of Man's Reaſon, ſo it can't but be very uſeful to him in governing his ſecular Affairs with Diſcretion. Conſideration makes a Man Maſter of his Reaſon, and that Man muſt needs act more wiſely, that hath his Reaſon at command, than he that makes it a ſlave to every flattering Paſſion; and ſince it is confeſſed, That the fear of God hath that Influence upon all human Affairs, that it diſpoſes a Man to a wiſe and prudential Management of them, Conſideration muſt of neceſſity be of the ſame Virtue and Efficacy, for this fear of God is the immediate product of Conſideration. I deny not but Men wiſe in Spiritual, are not always ſo in Temporal Concerns; for either their ſcrupulous Conſciences, or fear of having their Hearts carried out too much after the World, or their giving themſelves wholly to Heavenly Employments, may make them careleſs and unmindful of Things belonging to this World; but ſtill in
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its Nature and Tendency, this Circumspection in Things, which concern a Christian's Soul, is able to shed Wisdom and Discretion into his Carriage and Behaviour, in things which appertain to this present Life; Hence, from a Man who seriously considers he hath a Soul to be saved, you may expect great Order in his Family, a prudent Foresight of Dangers, and a moderate Care to shun them, great Temper in Discourse, and exact Justice in his Dealings, and rendering to all their Dues, *Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour*; as the Apostle's Phrase is, *Rom. 13. 7.*

In all Probability it was the attentive Consideration of his Spiritual Concerns, that made *David* both valiant and prudent in Matters; as he is called, *I. Sam. 16. 18.* and, to what can we ascribe *Joseph's* and *Daniel's* discreet Government of themselves, and their secular Affairs, but to that Piety and Goodness, which, by long and serious Consideration, they had settled in their Breasts? *When a Man's Ways please the Lord, he makes even his very Enemies to be at Peace with him, i. e.* he doth not only by an extraordinary Providence turn their Hearts towards him, but infuses Wisdom and Discretion into his Soul, so to behave himself towards his Enemies, that they cannot but bury their Hatred, and return to their former Friendship and Civility, *Prov. 16. 7.* He that considers his Ways, with reference to his Eternal State and Condition, his Ways cannot but please the Lord, and such Wisdom, if he stand not in his own Light, will surely fall

to his share, and hereof we need no other Proof, but common Experience.

The Man who truly minds his everlasting Interest, and so considers the account he must give to God, when this Life is ended, as to provide for that great and dreadful Audit, thinks himself obliged to use what cautiousness he can, that he may not wrong his God, his Soul, and his Neighbour; and this Cautiousness cannot but make him prudent in his secular Vocation; hence such a Man hath commonly his Wife, Children and Servants, in better Order than other Men, and mingles that Sweetness and Kindness with his Gravity or Severity, that they may have Encouragement to love him, and dread offending a far greater Master in Heaven; There is not that Discontent, that Emulation, that ill Language, that Backbiting, that Luxury, that Extravagance, that Tumult in such a Man's Family, as is to be observed in Houses, where little of God and Eternity is regarded. Such a Person spends in his House no more but what is decent and convenient, and so provides for those of his own Household, as not to forget doing Good to the *Levite, and to the Widow, and to the Fatherless*, Deut. 14. 28, 29. His speech is commonly with Grace, seasoned with Salt, full of Meekness and Gravity, and therefore less offensive, and he takes heed that it may not be laid to his Charge, That he hath bestowed more to feed his Pride and Luxury, than *Christ's* distressed Members; and, in publick Affairs, or places of great Trust, such a Man as minds, first Heaven, and then Earth, usually discovers far greater Wisdom in Manage-

Management of State-affairs, than those who first mind Earth, and Heaven when they have nothing else to do; for his Principles lead him so to carry himself to Man, as not to affront his God, as to advise his King to nothing but what is truly great and glorious, and beneficial for the Realm he governs: And, as a Prince may confide in such a Person more than in a sensual Man, so he hath reason to believe, That all Things will prosper better in his Hand, than in the others, because he first seeks the Honour of God, and then the Happiness of his King, and the Honour of that Nation he is a Member of; which is a Thing so pleasing to God, that there is nothing more frequent with him, than to bless such honest Endeavours, and to crown them with Success and Prosperity.

And certainly, he that can consider, how to keep himself from the everlasting Evil, may with greater Ease prevent temporal Mischief and Danger, which depend upon the Imprudence of his Actions; he that can row against the Stream, may with great Felicity row with it; he that can chearfully go up the Hill, will find no great Difficulty in going down; he that can do that which his Nature hath more than ordinary Aversion from, may more easily do that which his Nature hath a strong Byass and Inclination to: And he, whose Mind will serve him to turn away the ever burning Wrath of Almighty God, cannot want Judgment and Prudence to prevent the Wrath and Anger of those Men he converses withal: And he that can, by serious Consideration, make sure of a Seat in Heaven, cannot

want Power to consider, how to manage the Estate God hath given him in this World, to God's Glory, and his Neighbour's Good: And though Men, that are very considerate in their Soul-concerns, do not always use that Prudence we have mentioned in the Concerns of this present World; yet it is sufficient, that if they will make use of that Light, and those Arguments, which their Reason, thus improved by Consideration, doth furnish them withal, they may most certainly arrive to this Wisdom and Discretion, in secular Concerns and Businesses, which we have been speaking of. Indeed, 'tis very rational, that he that exercises his Reason much, and examines the Nature, Ends, Causes, Circumstances and Consequences of Things, as he must do, that seriously considers the Things that belong unto his everlasting Peace, would arrive to more than ordinary Wisdom in other Things; and that he that's prudent in the greater, should be able to proceed prudently in lesser Matters; that he *who is faithful in much, should be faithful in a little also*; and that he *who is just in the true Riches, should be very just in the Mammon of Unrighteousness too*, as we read *Luke 16. 10,*

II.



C H A P. VII.

A pathetic Exhortation to Men, who are yet Strangers to a serious religious Life, to consider their Ways; the Wilfulness of their Neglect, how dangerous it is; how inexcusable they are, how inhumane to God, and their own Souls; how reasonable God's Requests are, and how justly God may turn that Power of Consideration he hath given them, into blindness and hardness of Heart, since they make so ill a use of it, &c.

AND now, Reader, who ever thou art, that dost yet wallow, or allow thy self in any known Sin, and art not sincerely resolved to close with the Terms of *Christ's Eternal Gospel*, let me adjure thee, by the Mercies of God, not to reject, or superciliously to despise what here we have proposed. As thou art a Man, and owest Civility to all Creatures that have the signature of Man upon them, be but so kind and civil to this Discourse, as to allow it some serious Thoughts. Either thou hast a rational Soul, or thou hast not; If thou hast, let me entreat thee, by the Bowels of *Jesus*, to consider, Whether this present World be all the Sphere that God intended it should move in; If it be not, and if how to secure the happiness of the World to come, be the chief Thing this thy Soul is designed for, Why wilt thou frustrate God in his Expectation? Why wilt thou go contrary to all Creatures,

and wilt not prosecute the end for which thy Soul was made, and shed into thy Body? That there is such a Thing as a Life to come, and an Eternity of Joy and Torment; the one promised to a strict and heavenly Conversation, the other threatened to a loose and careless, or sensual Life, cannot be call'd into question by him, that shall impartially reflect upon the Premises: 'Tis certain, the Things which concern that other Life, are not discovered by our Senses, and therefore thou canst not hope to be affected with them that Way. 'Tis thy Reason only that can and must apprehend that future State, and so apprehend it, as to work upon thy Affections. But which Way is it possible thy reason should so apprehend it, as to fright thee from thy evil Courses, except it be improv'd by Consideration? Sinner, I do here, in the presence of God, conjure thee by all that's Good and Holy, by the interest and welfare of thine own Soul, by all the Laws of Self-interest, by the Revelations of the Son of God, by all that God ever did for Mankind, by that Love which transcends the Understandings of Men and Angels, by the groans of those miserable Souls which are now in hell, by all the Joys of Paradise, by the Testimony of thine own Conscience, by all the motions of God's Spirit in thy Heart, by all the Mercies thou dost receive from Heaven, by that Allegiance thou owest to God, by that Faithfulness thou owest to thine own Soul; I do most seriously conjure thee to tell me, Whether thou art not able to consider the evil of thy Courses, the beauty of God's Ways, and the sad consequences of Sensuality; Thou deniest thy own Being,

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deniest God's Favour to thy Soul, deniest the Glory of thy Creation, deniest the most visible and the most apparent thing in the World, if thou deniest thy Ability in this point; and if thou art able to consider so much, What Injustice can it be in God to demand an account of this Consideration? Wherein doth he do thee an Injury, if he demand what thou hast done with this Power? Wert thou in God's stead, wouldst not thou require the same account of thy Servant, on whom thou hadst bestowed such a Talent? If thou art able and wilt not take thy sinfulness into serious Consideration, can there be any thing more just in the World than thy Damnation? How easie were it for thee to lay home the danger thou art in; and seeing it is so easie, How just is it with God to let thee perish in that danger, thou art resolv'd, in despite of all God's Endeavours to the contrary, to fall and sink into? O Christian, how dreadful will it be for thee, when Christ shall depart from thee, with this doleful Exclamation, *How often would I have gathered thee, as a Hen doth gather her Chickens under her Wings, and thou wouldest not?* Wouldest not? This is it that makes thy everlasting Torments just. O Sinner, that God should invite thee to Heaven, and thou put him off with this Answer, *I will not!* That God should care for thee to become his Darling, and thou voluntarily and freely list thy self in the Catalogue of the Devil's Favourites and Votaries! That God should leave no means untried, to melt thy stubborn Heart, and thou desperately fight against his Heaven! And when he would thrust thee into it, violently
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break loose from him, and lay force upon Damnation! How inexcusable will this make thee? What Man, what Angel, can or dare plead for thee, after such horrid Wilfulness? By it thou shuttest up all Mens Compassion against thee. Were thy Error an Infirmary, or had invincible Ignorance caused thy Folly, some or other possibly might be moved to speak in favour of thy Concerns; but that thou, knowing the Will of God, and having power to think what the End of thy Courses will be, and Power to avoid the Danger, and Power to pray for Help, a gracious God to encourage thee, a glorious Reward to entice thee, Eternity to fright thee, the everlasting Gulph to startle thee, shouldst in despite of all these Motives, wilfully and maliciously shun thine own cure! This is a Malady which no Creature can justly shed a Tear, or frame an Apology for. Be astonished, O ye Heavens, and tremble, O thou Earth! Ye Angels, that rejoyce at a sinners Conversion here on Earth; O all ye that pass by, behold and see whether there be a sorrow as such a Sinner's sorrow is? We have read of Men that have eaten their Enemies, or Monsters that have devoured their own Children; but here is one devours himself, inhuman to a Prodigy! One that contrives how to shut himself out of Heaven, plots how to undermine his everlasting Salvation, and studies how to sink into the Dungeon of Desperation.

Sirs, What is it that we are exhorting you unto? Is it to dig down Mountains? Is it to exhaust
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the Sea? Is it to pull down the Sun from his Orb? Is it to reverse the Course of Nature? Is it to work Miracles? Is it to unhinge the Earth, or to stop the Flux and Reflux of the Ocean? One would think, by the earnestness and vehemency of Expressions we are forced to use, that it must be something beyond the Power of Man: But no, all that we keep this stir for is only, that you would consent to be happy, contrive how to inherit an incorruptible Crown, and think seriously how to escape your own Torment; and needs there any Intreaty for this? One would think you should run to us, break down the Doors of our Habitations, pull us out of our Studies, interrupt us though we were never so busie, and importune us, as that Widow did the Judge, and follow us Day and Night to be satisfied, the Thing is of that Importance. And Oh! did you but believe an Eternity, you would do so. Believe! Why, what should hinder you from believing it? What Arguments can you desire that you have not? Can there be any Thing surer than the Word of God? Can there be a greater Witness than the Son of God? God cannot deceive you, he cannot impose upon you, he cannot delude you; dare to believe him: Though you have not look'd into Hell, certainly there is one; though you have not seen the Joys above, yet such Joys there are: And, to consider, to study, to ponder, how to arrive to them, is the great Thing we press upon you, as being sensible of your Danger, sensible that Death will arrest you before you are aware of it, sensible that many Thousands are for ever

miserable

miserable for neglecting such Exhortations. O Sirs, we do not envy your worldly Happiness ; we dare assure you, That it is not any Grudge we have against your prosperity, that makes us put you in mind of these unwelcome Lessons ; We have a God calling upon us, to stop you in your Earnestness for the World : Woe to us, if we give you no warning ! Woe to you, if ye take no warning ! If making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof, would make you happy ; if Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness, and rolling in all the Pleasures that your flesh does promise, and your Fancy pay, could contribute any thing to your Felicity ; if solacing your selves in the wanton Streams of sensual Delights would lead you into Paradise, we promise you we would not molest or disturb you in your Ways ; Nay, if you had not Souls to be saved, did your Spirits die with your Bodies, we would not stint you in your Jollities. But oh ! can we read, how the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men, and see you fall a Prey to that Indignation ? Can we read how Tribulation and Anguish shall certainly fall upon every Soul that doth evil, and not speak to you to prevent it ? Can we read, how the Lord Jesus will e'er long come from Heaven in Flames of Fire, to take Vengeance of those who have continued to disobey his Gospel, and to punish them with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, and not call to you, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand ?*

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Can we read, how the unprofitable Servant, that made not use of his Talent, but buried it under Ground, and would not watch or make himself ready to meet his Master, shall be thrown into outer Darkness, where there is howling and gnashing of Teeth, and not beg of you *to trim your Lamps*, and arise from the Dead, that Christ may give you Light? Can we remember, how many Millions lie now roaring under the Fears and Terrors of their own Consciences in another World, that would not be persuaded to part with their darling Bosom Sins, till Death tore them away from them, and not testifie unto you, lest you also come into that Place of Torment? Can we see you stand upon the brink of Destruction, and be so cruel, as not to acquaint you with the bottomless Gulph that's underneath? Would you have us to be as tyrannical to you, as you are to your own Souls? Or would you have us leap into everlasting Burnings with you, for not reclaiming you from venturing into that Fire?

Sirs, what is it that doth discourage you from a sincere Consideration of your Spiritual Condition? What are you afraid of? Why do you loiter? Why do ye deliberate whether you shall or no? Why do you dispute the Cause? Why do ye stand musing? What hinders you? Is there any impediment that you may not remove, if you will? Had you been but a Quarter of an Hour in Hell, would not you call all those Men Sots and Fools, that now excuse their wilful Neglect of this Work? Would not you see the Vanity of their Pretences? Would not you confess, that all
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those pretended clogs are mere Cobwebs, which may be broke through with the greatest Ease? Would you be frightened from this Duty by any temporal Losses, as now you are? Are you afraid Men will laugh at you for being serious? Had not you better be laughed at here, than be scorned by God and his holy Angels to all Eternity? Had not you better be jeer'd here, than have the great King of Heaven laugh at your endless Calamity, and mock when your everlasting Fears do come upon you? If a Fool laughs at you, do you regard it? And why should you regard such Mens scorn any more than the laughter of Fools? Alas they are distempered in their Brains, they see not the Things that belong to their Peace, they know not what Religion means! Will any Man give over the Study of Divinity, or Law, or Physick, because the ignorant Peasant sneers at him? Will a Tradesman leave his Calling, because such a Man makes Songs and Ballads upon it? If you are persuaded, that Consideration, and longing after your Spiritual Concerns, is the way to real Happiness, will you be miserable, because another Man will not have you to be happy? Will that Man that laughs at you for despising the World, save you harmless at the Day of Judgment? Will he bail you out, when God's Thunders shall break out upon all disobedient Sinners? Will he undertake for you, when God will be abused and mocked no longer, and the Day of his Wrath doth come? Will he be your Advocate, when you shall have your Consciences pleading against you? Alas, poor forlorn Wretches! He
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will not be able to answer for himself, how then should he plead your Cause? And if he can do you no service, cannot secure you against the anger of the Almighty, why will you be persuaded by the Anger or Displeasure of a Man, though never so great and powerful, to omit that, on which your eternal Welfare doth depend?

Sinner, as light as thou makest now of this serious Reflection on thy Spiritual Concerns, thou must consider them one Time or other: If thou wilt not here, God will force thee to do it in Hell, whether thou wilt or no: Here Consideration may do good, but there it will but aggravate thy Torments; here it may snatch thee like a Brand out of the Fire, there it will increase thy Flames; here it may be a means to enlighten thee, there it will be a means to confound thee for ever. Proud, Self-conceited Man, who canst find no Time for serious Consideration here! In Hell thou wilt have Time enough, and Oh! how many sad Hours will it cause to consider, how thou hast mispent thy Time, how thou hast flung away so many precious Hours upon thy unlawful Pleasures, how thou hast derided such a Sermon, hardened thy Heart upon such a Discourse, slighted God's Motions to Repentance, smothered the Checks of thine own Conscience, preferred the World before Heaven, obeyed Man more than thy Creator, suffered every Trivial outward Respect to call thee away from Devotion, mistrusted God's Providence, taken his Name in vain, laughed at the wholsom Counsels of thy Parents and Teachers, despised thy Neighbours, censured

fured their Actions more than thy own, taken thy fill of Sin, been weary of following Christ, backward to any Thing that's Good, delighted with nothing but Vanity and Folly, dishonoured God, disgraced Religion; Exposed it to Contempt and Scorn, drawn others into Vice, laugh'd Men into Folly, dragged them into Hell, murdered their Souls as well as thy own, neglected thy Prayers, disregarded the Poor, oppressed the Needy, been greedy after the World, and undervalued the Pains and Cost God did bestow to entice thee to enter into his Rest! At this Time thou wilt be forced to consider, how great a Blessing thou hast refused, what Comfort thou hast deprived thy self of, what a wise Course those took, that would not be persuaded by the vain careless World, to cast God's Law behind them. But alas! These Considerations would then be too late; Time was, when thou mightest have considered the Odiousness of Sin, and turned from thy evil Ways; Time was, when thou mightest have considered the absolute Necessity of despising the World, and dedicated thy self, thy Children, thy Life and Wealth to God's Service; Time was, when thou mightest have considered, That God's Mercy and Patience did lead thee to Repentance, and so have turned to God with all thy Heart, and this had been to secure God's Favour, and to enter thy Name in the Book of Life; but in Hell such Thoughts do but gnaw and sting the more, there they do but augment thy Sorrow and Indignation against thy self; There they do but make thee weary of thy Life, and the Worst of
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it is, That there thou canst not be rid of these Considerations, they'll come into thy mind against thy Will; Here thou didst take pains to keep them out, there thou canst not hinder them from burthening and oppressing thy Soul; Here business and mirth diverted them, there thou canst not shake them off with all the Industry and Labour thou canst use; Thou needest no accuser there, these Considerations will be sufficient Witnesses against thee; There, there thou'lt wish, O that I had believed the Preachers of the Word! I find those Men were in the Right, I find they saw more than I did, I find they were not mistaken; if I had followed their Advice, I had built my House upon a Rock; I find they spoke no more but reason, I find they exhorted me to nothing but what was safe and beneficial to my Soul. Forgive me, ye Men of God, pardon my Contempt of your Zeal and Fervency, O send me some *Lazarus*, that he may dip the tip of his Finger in water, and cool my Tongue: If your Prayers, if your Tears, if your Intreaties, if your Intercessions can prevail with God, O help, help, for I perish in this Gulph! Plead with your God, solícite for me at the Throne of Grace, double, treble your Cries and Supplications; Try whether God will have Mercy on me, who have had no Mercy on my self. I am frightened, I am troubled on every side; I would stab my self, and cannot; Die, and must not; Escape, and dare not: Pity, pity a poor miserable Worm! Will none relieve me? Do all forsake me? Do Men and Angels leave me? Is there no Body to speak Comfort to me? Is

there no Door for Consolation open? Are all the Avenues to Mercy shut? Hear, hear ye Inhabitants of Heaven! Are you deaf to my Groans? Are you grown strangers to Compassion? Where is your wonted Clemency? Will no Repentance touch the Heart of God? Will no Sorrow move him? Will no Anguish melt him? Dull Citizens of that celestial Common-wealth! Are you so busie with *Hallelujaks*, as not to hear these Cries? Are you not frightened by these Sobs in your chearful Melodies? Are you so taken up, That none of you can look down into these dismal Vaults?

Look! yonder is the bright *Moses*, the Man whose Face did shine, that with his Prayers discomfited *Amaleck*, and when the Almighty would have destroyed the Host of *Israel*, stood in the Gap, and blunted the consuming Angel's Sword! Is all his Power gone? Is the Virtue of his Prayer lost? Ah! will he not pray, That this Wretch this Worm, this poor Malefactor, who would fain repent, may be set free? Where is that *Joshua* that prayed for the Sun's standing still, and it stood still in the midst of Heaven? Hath he no Prayer left to stop my Calamity, and to give a Truce to my Torments? Where is that *Elijah*, that prayed that there might be no Rain, and there came no Rain for Three Years and six Months? And cannot he pray that this Fire may go out?

A thousand such Cries will then be in vain! Consideration now would most certainly prevent those Cries; This would represent the Groans of those Wretches, in that dismal Prison, in such lively

lively Characters to thy mind, that thou wouldst be restless till thou didst get into the straight way that leads to life; and art not thou ready to embrace it? What Friend, what Enemy, what Devil, what Charm quenches the Fire of thy Resolutions? Dost thou own God for thy Creator and Governor, One that hath greater Reason to command thee, than thy Prince, or Master, or Parents, and dost thou refuse to obey him? Dost thou believe, That whatever is in Man, and can challenge Obedience, is more eminently in God; and dost thou scruple to comply with his Will? Wilt thou prove a Rebel to thy Prince, a Prodigal Son to thy Father, an unfaithful Servant to the best of Masters? Why shouldst not thou trust God with thy Soul? Why shouldst not thou run at his Call? What is it, Sinner, that would make thee take thy Ways into serious Consideration? Would a Circle do it? Why, thou hast as great reason to believe, That those Miracles, which are recorded in the Gospel to have been wrought for Confirmation of Christ's Saying; were really wrought, and performed, as thou hast to believe the Reality of a Miracle, if thou shouldst see one wrought before thine Eyes. Either thou believest that those Miracles were wrought by Christ and his Apostles, or thou dost not; If thou dost not, Why dost not thou examine the Circumstances to be satisfied? If thou dost, What need there any more Miracles? If those Miracles will not persuade thee, How should a new Miracle do it? Nay, How should we be sure that the sight of a new Miracle would work upon thee? How

soon would Time wear out the Memory of it, and leave thee as careless as it found thee? Thou seest miraculous Providences every Day, and yet they move thee not; that God spares such a rebellious sinful Wretch as thou art, so long, and after so many Thousand provocations, is a Miracle; Thou seest Water turned into Wine every Year, for the insipid Liquor of the Vine is turned into another Taste; Thou seest how from a dry Acorn a mighty Tree doth grow, which gives protection to Men and Beasts, and to the Fowls of the Air; thou knowest how from that liquid Principle *Job* doth speak of, *A Man cloathed with skin and flesh, and fenced with bones and sinews, rises.* What mighty Miracles would these be, if they were not common? And yet none of these stir thy Soul to reflect seriously, what thou must do to be saved. Would an audible Voice from Heaven do it? Why, how couldst thou be sure it came from Heaven? And should a Voice come to thee from the Regions of Bliss, should God vouchsafe thee such a Message immediately from the Clouds as this, *Return, thou backsliding Sinner, and I will not cause mine Anger to fall upon thee; for I am merciful, and will not keep Anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine Iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast not obeyed my Voice:* Why, it would not be more but what God hath said already, it might for the present surprize and startle thee a little; but if that precept written cannot work upon thy Soul, 'tis to be feared the Precept spoke from Heaven would make no very lasting Impression

pression upon thee. Thou art sufficiently assured, so assured that a Man of Reason cannot justly desire better Grounds, That God hath spoke those Words to thee already; and if God's repeating this Duty so often in his Word can do no good, what hope is there, that repeated again, it would draw thy heart away from Sin, and from the World? Would a Man's rising from the Dead, do it? Why, Christ is risen from the Dead, and is become the First-fruits of them that slept; and he doth, with all the protestations that are fit for a God to make, assure thee, That he that believes not, that is, shews not his Faith by his Works, shall be damned; and would engage thy mind to ruminate upon that Threatning, and to think which way thou mayst flee, and be freed from that destruction he speaks of: And why wilt thou not give credit to what he saith? Nay if thou shouldst see a Spirit, the Ghost of one that had been thy Acquaintance formerly, a Ghost that should, by woeful Experience, inform thee, That those things the Scripture speaks of, are undoubtedly true, and that God will proceed exactly, according to what he hath promised, and threatned there, it would more satisfy thy curiosity, than advance thy piety: And the Question still may be, Whether it would satisfy thy curiosity? For 'tis possible thou mayst imagine, that it might be a deception of sight, and so forget it, and slight it, and make little of that Motive. Thou confessest Christ's Resurrection, and why he should not be believed before a Spirit, especially when a Spirit could say no more than he hath said, I cannot well conceive.

Sinner, who seeth not, That all these Pretences, are like the Wishes of sickly Men, that wish for this or that fruit, or this or that Dish, and when it is brought, it is so far from curing them, that often it makes them worse, and increases their Distemper? Who sees not, that these are but Inventions, to give some Colour of Reason to thy Unwillingness, to shake off the Sins which do so easily beset thee? Who sees not, that these are only Arguments suggested by the Devil, to keep thy Soul from her true Food and Nourishment? And who is the Loser all this While? Thou wouldst fain impose upon God, and make him believe, That 'tis not want of Will, but want of Assurance, that this serious Consideration of thy Ways is necessary, that it makes thee stand out against it. And alas! the Cheat thou seekest to put upon God, thou puttest upon thine own Soul; and is thy Soul so inconsiderable a Thing, that thou makest nothing of deluding, and circumventing it?

What thinkest thou, Sinner? Suppose thou didst see a Senate, or Parliament, made up of very grave, wise, sober, judicious Men, who should unanimously give their verdict in a cause, and determine it; and while these Men, after a serious deliberation, give their Judgment in the Case proposed to them, in comes the Malefactor against whom they have given Sentence, accuses the Decree of the Senate of *Injustice*, charges their Vote with a Lye, and takes a great deal of Pains to make the World believe a Tale of his own making; whom wouldest thou believe, that

that grave, wise, judicious Senate, or the Malefactor? The Senate, sure ; and then, when God, Angels and Men, the wisest, the gravest, the learnedest of them, do all unanimously determine, That without a serious Consideration of thy Spiritual Concerns, thou canst not arrive to any sincere Reformation of Life, canst never know the Danger thou art in, or what thou must do to escape unquenchable Fire ; and that without it thou art truly a miserable Man, and dost take the Way that leads to Destruction ; hast thou the impudence to oppose thy sickly opinion, which arises from a distempered Head, and a more distempered Conscience, to the grave, sound and orthodox Judgment of Men, infinitely wiser than thy self? When all, with one consent, affirm, That thou art sick to Death, and nothing but Consideration can recover thee ; Wilt thou cancel their Verdict, by prescribing to thy self Medicines of thine own making? All cry out against thy inconsiderate Course of Life, God doth not justify it, Angels do condemn it, The preachers of the Gospel confute it, Philosophers arraign it, Thy Reason hath Arguments against it, Thy Conscience chides thee for it, Thy sober Neighbours reprove it ; And wilt not thou subscribe to their Sentence? What Insolence is it to think thy self more knowing, than he that knows all Things? Behold, Sinner, here lies the Way to Heaven, God is intreating thee to walk in it ; The Devil is busied to discourage thee from it. God saith, here I will be found ; The Devil suggests, That the Sons of *Adm*ack dwell there. God wishes thou wouldst

yield and live; The Devil, that thou wouldst stand out, and die. God seeks to crown thee; the Devil to rob thee of thy Diadem. God assures thee, That this is the Garden where thy Graces must grow; the Devil argues, That nothing but Weeds and Thistles grow there. All the dispute is, who shall have thy Soul, God or the Devil? Think, Sinner, for God's sake, think who is the Rewarder, and who is the Tormentor; who is the King that can save thee, and who is the Executioner that studies only to ruin thee. Shall not God prevail? Wilt not thou give him thy Heart? And shall Satan go away with thy Soul? Shall he possess that Treasure, which Angels are ambitious of? For shame, let not God go away empty; think what a Condescension it is in God, to be willing to accept of so inconsiderable a Present as thy Heart? What is thy Soul to him? What benefit doth he receive by offering thee his Bosom? If thou hast such a mind to be the Devil's Slave, what need God take pains to rescue thee from than Bondage? Dost thou think he cannot live without thee? Dost thou think thy being in his Heaven, doth add any Thing to his felicity? Cannot he as well be glorified in thy Torments, as he can in thy Salvation? Cannot he make his Justice triumph over such a stubborn Wretch as thou art? Wherein doth his Advantage lie? May not he be Good, and Great, and Glorious; and admired by Angels, while thou friest in Hell? Thou hast very highly obliged him indeed, that he need be at all this Trouble to make thee in love with his Ways! Shouldst not thou stand amazed at his Favour?

Favour? Shouldst not thou wonder, That this immense and infinite Majesty will vouchsafe a gracious Look to so vile a Worm as thou art? And canst thou see a God court thee, and grow coy? Doth God offer to kiss thee with the kisses of his Lips, and dost thou scorn his Embraces? Canst thou see him care for thee, and turn away thy Face? Wilt thou prefer the motions of a lying Devil, before the Oracles of the great God of Heaven? Hadst thou rather go along with him that will murder thee, than accompany him that will encircle thy head with a Crown of Glory? Shall God magnify his Mercy upon thee, and wilt thou fall in love with his Enemy? Doth God intend, by making Love to thy Soul, to give a Character to the World of his infinite Goodness and Compassion, and dardest thou be so bold as to lessen that Character, by thy contempt and ingratitude?

Behold, Sinner, God is willing to lay aside his flaming Sword; thou shalt hear of him no more in the Earthquake, or in the Storm, or in the mighty Wind, that breaks the Rocks in pieces, but in the still small voice: The voice of *Boanerges* shall sound no more in thy Ears, he'll blow his Trumpet of War no more, all his frowns shall be done away, he'll fright thee no more with Hell-fire; if his Grace, his Mercy, his Compassion can but allure thee to bethink thy self, and close with him, and so to consider the Concerns of thy Soul, as to resign thy self altogether to his guidance and direction: His Aspect shall be kind, his Countenance shall be nothing but Smiles, his Face shall be a perpetual Sun-shine, if
by

by Consideration of thy Ways, thou wilt become sensible of thy former folly, and throw it away, and take up with him alone: If his kindly beams can thaw thy frozen Heart, if his Calm can win thee, and make thee prostrate thy self before the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*, Heaven and Earth shall be no longer in conspiracy against thee, and thou shalt not need to look any more for Thunders and Lightnings from that Heaven! Stand still, Sinner, and see the Salvation of God; behold, Grace and Mercy lies weeping at thy Feet; The free, the sovereign, the extensive, the attractive Grace of God comes wooing to thy Soul, and doth bespeak thee in this manner; Hold, hold, Thou poor befotted Creature, whither dost thou run? Hear, hear, I bring thee the joyfullest Tidings, that ever were brought to the ears of Men; God will be thy Father, the Lord Jesus thy Saviour, the Holy Ghost thy Comforter, the Angels thy Companions; Thy Life shall be a perpetual Holy-day; Thou shalt be a Friend of God, an Heir of Heaven, and Co-heir with Christ, thy sins shall be all done away, thy iniquities shall be remembered no more, all the Promises of the Gospel shall be thine, God will vouchsafe to live with thee, the Holy Ghost will make thy Soul his Temple, thou shalt have strength to overcome Hell and Devils, Flames and Swords, and be more than a Conqueror, through him that loved thee, the Lord Jesus Christ: Ask a Heaven, and thou shalt have it; a Crown, and it shall be thrown into thy bosom; a Kingdom, and it shall be thine; ask all the Treasures of Glory, and they shall
not

not to be denied thee: From this Time forward thy Name shall be inrolled among the Favourites of Heaven, and in thy Soul, as in *Jacob's Ladder*, The Angels shall be continually ascending and descending, and thy Head, like *Gideon's Fleece*, shall be watered with the dew of Heaven, while the unbelieving World shall be dry; and all this shall be thine, if my Love, my Mercy, my Kindness can prevail with thee, and engage thee to think seriously, what thou must do to please God, and to be happy for ever. O Sinner, had those who now lie sweltering under the burning Wrath of Almighty God such an Offer as this, how would they leap, and triumph, and agree to so reasonable a Condition, and thank God upon their bended Knees, Day and Night, and praise him without Intermission, that he would vouchsafe to receive them, on no harder Terms than these! O Sinner, is thy heart a Stone, that it doth not dissolve at this gracious Message? Can the Rock hold out against these Bowels of Compassion? Poor stubborn Wretch! Were not thy heart all steel, were not thy Conscience seared, how couldst thou forbear being prick'd at the Heart? Hadst thou but the least Spark of good Nature left in thee, What might not these golden Chains, these silken Strings, these Cords of Love, do with thy immortal Soul? The only reason that the Servants that *Benhadad* had, to humble themselves to the King of *Israel*, was this, *We have heard that the Kings of Israel are merciful Kings*. Sinner, hast not thou both heard and seen, and seest it to this Day, That the true King of *Israel* is a merciful

merciful King? And will not this prevail with thee, to throw thy self down at his feet, and kiss his Scepter, and consider thy imprudence, in deviating so long from the end of thy Creation and Redemption, and make thee contented to part with all the strong holds of iniquity within thee, and with all imaginations that exalt themselves against the Obedience of *Christ Jesus*.

O do not tell me, that thou wilt most certainly bethink thy self some time hereafter, when sickness and approaching Death shall take thee off from thy worldly business; Vain foolish Man! How doth thou know thou shalt live till to Morrow? For, *What is thy life? even a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.* How many thousands are cut off as they are going up the Hill, in the Noon of their Days, before half their race be run; and what Patent hast thou from Heaven, that it shall not be thus with thee? God laughs at that Repentance, which Men begin, when they can keep sin and the World no longer; he sees it is forced, and squeezed, and weak, and feeble; and will God accept of thy Devotion, when thou hast exhausted the Cream and Marrow of thy Bones in the Devil's Service? How, Sinner! Consider thy Ways upon thy Death-bed? Mad Man! Dost thou know what Consideration means? The Soul must be in its full strength, that considers the sinfulness, and sad Consequences of her Life. Dost not thou see, how in sickness the Soul sympathizes with the Body? How the Mind languishes with the Flesh? How weak how feeble the Thoughts are upon a Death-bed?

bed? How the mind is employed with thinking of the pain, and anguish, and uneasiness of the Body? How Men's weakness scarce gives them leave to repeat the *Lord's Prayer* intire, without interruption? How settling their Estates, and disposing of their worldly Affairs, and Sorrow and Vexation that they have not managed their secular Concerns with greater Prudence, takes up their Cogitations? And how transitory and superficial Men's Thoughts of Sin, and of another World are, except they have gotten a habit of Heavenly-mindedness, by a long and constant Practice of Holiness, in the Time of their Health and Liberty before? And doth Salvation deserve no more, but a few slight and skin-deep Reflections, when thou liest a dying? Canst thou have such low Thoughts of everlasting Glory, as to let Consideration of it come behind all the Satisfaction of the Flesh? Canst thou entertain such pitiful sneaking Conceits, concerning that mighty Heaven, God, out of his singular and unparalell'd Mercy, hath condescended to promise to his Saints, as to delay thy Contemplations, and thy taking a view of it, till thy Heart-strings break, and thy Throat begins to rattle, and the House is falling? *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Alas! when Men are dying, the Time of working is past, that's the Night wherein no Man can work; That's the Time indeed to reap the Comfort of our former conscientious Practices, but not the Time to work out our Salvation in; That's the Time of rejoycing, because
our

our Redemption draws nigh, not the Time of setting out from the gates of Hell; that's the time to finish our Course with Joy, not the Time to begin a holy Life. Alas! The strength and vigour which must be used in a Heavenly Conversation is then gone, and Men are just upon the point of reckoning with God; Their Accounts must then be ready, not to make up: So that if thou art not ready now to take thy Spiritual Concerns into serious Consideration, thy Heart will be hardened every Day more and more, and the longer thou livest, the less mind thou wilt have to set about it; and if thou dost not think it worth thy Trouble, to spare now and then an hour from thy Worldly businesses, to mind this one thing necessary, thou doest as good as tell God, That thou wilt have none of his Heaven, and judgest thy self unworthy of eternal Life.

O sinner, the present time is the day of salvation, this is the acceptable time, now strike, and thy sins will fall; Now strive, and the Crown will be thine; Now fall to work, and promise thy self Eternal Rest: Thou canst call no Time thine own but the present, that's only in thine hands; make use of that, and save thy self from this untoward Generation. Extricate thy self from the delusions of the Flesh, Take courage, and be gone; stay not in *Sodom*, now accept of Mercy, now lay up thy Treasure, and secure thy Right to the Tree of Life; now remember thy Creator, and God will remember thee when he makes up his Jewels, and spare thee, as a Man would spare his own Son that serves him.

Hear

Hear then this, Men, Fathers, and Brethren! the God of your Fathers, the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*, hath sent us to you, to tell you, That his Supper is ready, and the Doors are open, and the Guests are come, and yet there is room; and that you may fill the Room which is left, is the Message we come to acquaint you withal from him who delights not in the Death of a sinner, but would have him turn and live. Hear this, ye Great Ones, ye Nobles, ye Mighty Men, and *Consider your Ways*: Consider whether that voluptuous Life you lead, is like that Life which that Saviour in whom you pretend to believe, doth prescribe in his Gospel? Consider whether you are not obliged to practise all those Virtues and Duties that the meaner Sort perform? And whether in framing to your selves a new Way to Heaven, a Way different from what the Word of God doth represent, you are like to be happy in those Castles of Air you build, and like to arrive to that Glory which you wish for, and hope to be received into? Consider what your Pride and Sensuality will at last conclude in? And whether you will dare to brave it at the Great Tribunal, as now you do on Earth, where you have no Body to controul you? Ye that are Magistrates, whom Providence hath placed over others to execute Justice, and to shew a good Example, *Consider your Ways*. Consider how heavy your Connivance at the most notorious sins, Sins that offer to pluck even God out of his Throne, will lie upon your Consciences one Day! Consider what Hurt you
do,

do, how many Souls you ruine, by your dehauched and luxurious Lives! Consider whether you can satisfie God as easily as you can do Man, and whether that injustice, that oppression, that covetousness, that lewdness you make nothing of now, are not sins weighty enough to bear you down into the burning Lake? Ye learned Men, whether Ministers, or others, who see and know more than the Vulgar do, *Consider your Ways.* Consider whether that great Knowledge you have will not procure you double Stripes, if you improve it not into a higher Degree of seriousness than common people use; Consider what a ridiculous Thing you make Religion, if, being perswaded and convinced of the rationality of it, you do not express the Power of it in your Conversations. Consider whether building Heaven with your Voices, and Hell with your Behaviour and Deportment, will not bring down upon you the severest Plagues that are written in the Book of God! Ye that are Hearers of the Word, and frequent the Temple of the Lord, to be taught his statutes, and his Ordinances, *Consider your Ways.* Consider whether so many Entreatings, Warnings, Reproofs and Admonitions, in season and out of season, which you take no notice of, will not be brought in one day as evidences to justify your everlasting condemnation? Consider how God is like to resent your barrenness and unfruitfulness under the richest means of Grace, under the droppings of his fatness! Consider how justly God may punish your not digesting and applying his Commands and Precepts to
your

your selves, with hardness and blindness of Heart, and whether this Judgment be not more frequent than the World is aware of, and whether you do not participate of that Judgment? Hear this, all ye that carry rational, angelical Souls in your Breasts, *Consider your Ways.* Consider what enslaving your Souls to vicious affections will come to, and whether they will not thrive better, being irradiated with Heavenly Light, than warmed by Hellish Lusts; and whether it will not be more for your Credit to advance them to their primitive lustre and beauty, than lose them by Sin and Vanity. Sirs, you stand upon the brink of a bottomless Pit; Who but a Man, whose brains are crack'd, would not look about himself? The least push or thrust sends you thither. Who would not take some pains to get into a Harbour? The ship is ready to be cast away, the Masts are split, 'tis leaking on every Side; Who would not lay hold of a plank to save himself from drowning? If you know not what to do with that power of Consideration God hath given you, marvel not if God takes it away; And since you will not bethink your selves how to be freed from Sin and Misery, protests in his Anger, That you shall not be able to make use of that power any more, in order to obtain eternal Life; since you will not take up that Sword of the Spirit, to cut the Cord of Sin and Disobedience, no wonder if God blunts and dulls the Edge of it, that it shall be of no use to you, when you would employ it. O Christians, there is no jesting with a merciful God; where the greatest Mercy is scorned

and rejected, What can ye expect but the severest Judgments? Be wise therefore, before the black Decree be irreversibly Signed and Sealed against you; you'll bless the Hour and the Day which bears the *Date* of your entire and sincere Agreement to God's Will in this Particular; and when you shall find, by blessed Experience, That this serious Consideration of your Ways is the Gate to Paradise, you'll admire the Bounty, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, that moved your hearts to embrace the Motion, and you will not be able to forbear breaking out into singing the Song of *Moses*, and the Song of the Lamb, *Blessing, Honour, and Glory be unto him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*



C H A P. VIII.

Of Retirement and Prayer, the two great Helps to Consideration. Retirement proved to be necessary to make Consideration of our Spiritual State more quick and lively. Prayer calls in the Assistance of God's Spirit, and renders the Work effectual. A Form of Prayer to be used upon this Occasion.

I Will charitably suppose, That the preceeding Exhortation may have made some Impression upon my Reader, and made him in some Measure, willing to think more of his Soul, and of the Danger it is in, and of his Eternal State,

State, than formerly he usually did; and therefore to shew him how this Consideration must be managed, that it may in truth conquer and subdue his inordinate Affections, and make them subject to the best of Masters, I shall lay down some necessary helps to Consideration, and these are, to mention no more, *Retirement* and *Prayer*.

I. *Retirement*. Though I readily grant, (and do condemn it too) that Men, as they are walking with others, or travelling, or going Abroad about their necessary Occasions, or standing in their Shops, or other Rooms, where Company goes in and out, may think, that the course they have taken hitherto is not safe, and therefore 'tis high Time to change and alter it: Yet seeing those Thoughts are too much diverted by sensual Objects, and apt to go no farther than the mind or understanding, and reach no deeper than speculation; it must necessarily follow, that *Retirement* is requisite, to make it reach the Affections, and to spread it as far as the Life and Conversation.

By *Retirement*, I do not mean absconding, or hiding ones self in a Corner in the Country, or in a Wilderness, but retiring in our own Houses. Let the place we live in be never so populous, to be sure we have Chambers to be private in; and as the Rich may make their best Room a Desert for this Work, so the poorest may convert any corner in their Houses into a place for this Exercise; 'tis not the neatness of a Closet that cleanseth the Soul from filthiness, nor the curiosity and convenience of a With-drawing-room,

room, that fits the heart for him that made it ; but as Christ made sometimes a Mountain, sometimes a Ship, sometimes a Cross, his pulpit ; So a Man may make a Meadow, a Field, a Wood, a Garret, any Corner of his House, a Place fit to retire in, to consider seriously how the Case stands between God and his own Soul. I know what Men do commonly object, the very same thing they object against Consideration itself, and whereof we have sufficiently spoke in the second Impediment, *viz.* That they have a great deal of business, and that they can spare no Time for this Retirement. Business, no doubt, must be done. But there is a time for every thing, and a season for every purpose under Heaven, and then sure there must be a time for this Spiritual retirement too ; if there be not, we are obliged to find time for it : He that cannot, or rather will not, had as good say, he hath no time to be saved ; and he that cannot sometimes neglect the Concerns of his Body, or Estate, for the Concerns of his better part, derides Salvation, and does not believe that there is such a Thing, or if there be, that it is of so much value, as the Dirt and Dung he grovels in. 'Tis true, *Manasses's* Retirement was forced, much against his Will, yet still it was Privacy that contributed much to his Amendment ; For while he was encompassed with his Courtiers and Flatterers and his fawning Crew, he thought Religion a Thing below him, and a New Creature but a canting Term ; but being alone, none but God and his Calamity about him, having nothing to take off his Thoughts from reflecting on his Apostacy, behold

hold how Consideration melts him, his Conscience sets upon him, makes him ashamed of his Unfaithfulness to his God, makes the Tears stand in his Eyes; and so great is his Change, that he who had exceeded the Nations round about him in Idolatry, and Lewdness, immediately *takes away all the strange Gods, and the Idols out of the House of the Lord, and all the Altars that he had built on the Mount of the House of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the City, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord,* II. Chron. 33. 15, 16.

So pleasing is this Retirement to God, that he doth expressly call himself, *Our Father which sees in secret,* Matth. 6. 4. When Christ had a mind his Disciples should see his Glory, he doth not carry them to *Jerusalem*, leads them not into the Market-place, doth not mingle them with the Multitude, bids them not attend him at *Herod's Court*; For he knew, these Places would rather distract, than help, their Devotion: But he summons them to go up with him into a high Mountain apart, bids them retire from secular Business, leave their sensual Affections at Home, separate themselves from such worldly Employments, as were apt to take up their Minds, that their Thoughts might be more at Liberty to contemplate his Glory, and the Transfiguration might affect them more, and make the deeper Impressions upon them.

Come, my People, enter thou into thy Chamber, and shut thy Doors about thee, and hide thy self,

said God to the sinful Men of *Israel*, when he bid them turn and repent, *Isa.* 26. 20. To shew, That a Chamber is a fitter place for their Work than a Theatre, and a Closet more proper than a Hall or Dining-room, and locking our selves up, a better preparative, than delighting in variety of Company.

It was, I confess, too lavish an Expression which the Hermit in *Sulpitius* used, *That he who was visited by Men could not be visited by Angels*; yet in some respect he said true; and he that doth not love to be alone sometimes, is not like to receive the visits of these ministring Spirits.

It was in Retirement, that *Elijah* raised the dead Child, *Reg.* 17. 19. and by the River *Chebar* it was in a lonely place, that God appeared to *Ezekiel*; so he revealed himself to *Moses* in the Bush, when at a great distance from Men, and Crowds of People: And therefore it was an excellent Advice *St. Chrysostom* gave to a Man, who intended for Salvation, Depart from the High-way, and transplant thy self in some inclosed Ground, for it is hard for a Tree that stands by the Way-side to keep her Fruit till it be ripe.

What *St. Basil* saith of a solitary Life, may in a great measure be applied to such Retirement. It is the School where Men are taught Celestial Doctrine, and Divine Arts and Sciences are infused by nothing so soon, as by this Discipline. This is a Garden of Delights, where Virtues, like glittering Flowers, send forth their grateful Odours. Here grows the red Rose, fervent Charity. Here rises the Milk-white Lilly, Chastity.
Here

Here the Myrtle of Mortification is seen, and the Frankincense of Prayer is here to be found. O Retirement! the Joy of sanctified Minds, and the Seat of all Spiritual Guests; Thy Virtue is the same with that of the *Babylonian* Furnace, for by Faith thou keepst off the burning Heats of Lust. Thou art that Oven, where the Vessels of Honour are prepared. Great Store-house of Heavenly Wares, where all the rich Merchandise of the Spirit is hoarded up. Vast Shop of spiritual Exercises, where the Soul comes to be restored to her Creator's Image, and returns to the Purity of her Original.

Thou makest indeed the Lips pale with Fasting, but makest the Soul fat and flourishing. Thou makest the Good Man stand in the Castle of his own clarified Mind, and look down with Contempt on this nether World!

Sacred Tent, where our holy War is carried on, Camp of God, Tower of *David*, where hang a Thousand Shields, all fit to keep off the fiery Darts of the Devil! Field, where the Lord's Battles are fought, where the Soul fights against the Flesh, and the Flesh against the Soul.

O Retirement! The happy place where Vices die, and Virtues live, and where Men learn what it is to arrive to Perfection. Great Ladder of *Jacob*, whereby Men climb to Heaven, and Angels come down to Men. Sweet and golden Way, whereby a Christian goes home to his Father's House! Bath of the Soul! Death of Sin! Purgatory of Filthiness! Thou destroyest the secret Intrigues of Pride, washest away the Nastiness

nels of Sin, and elevatest the Soul to the Brightness of Angels!

For indeed we find, that as a Man's Reason is more free in such Retirements, so God is the readier to meet him, as the Angels did *Jacob*, in his privacy, and to display to him the Vanity of that World he hath doated on, the Scarlet Dye of those Sins he hath delighted in, and that miraculous Love he hath undervalued and trampled on, with the Vengeance he hath procured, and been greedy of: For now it appears, that the Man is in good earnest to be saved, and to such God never denies his Favour, for most Men play with Religion, go about it as if it deserved no pains, and therefore here God doth no mighty work, as being loath to cast his Pearls before Swine. He that retires to consider what he must do to be saved, makes Religion his business; and, *those that seek me thus, shall find me*, faith eternal Wisdom, *Prov. 8. 17.* Such Mens minds he is willing to overshadow with the Power of the Highest, such Men prepare to meet their God, and God certainly will not fail them. And, Christians, say you what you will, either the Gospel is no Gospel, or you'll find by woeful Experience, that without you are at some Trouble about your everlasting concerns, and deny yourselves in your Time, Profit, Ease, Pleasure, and Punctilio's of Greatness, to mind your Spiritual Interest; and without Heaven doth cost you something more than ordinary, God hath no Heaven for you.

He that retires, and sets aside his Worldly business, and makes bold with the Company he is

is in, and leaves them to take a View of his Duty to God and Man, that Man lays force upon the Kingdom of Heaven, I am sure he offers violence to his carnal Interest, violence to Flesh and Blood. The Heathen could say, That the Gods sell all their Gifts and Riches for Diligence and Industry. And we find it to be true of the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and that Person who retires and takes pains, with *Zaccheus*, to see *Christ*, may expect the same gracious Return, which was made to that Publican, *This Day Salvation is come into thy House.*

The Truth is, should God discourse a Sinner, that is in company with other Men, or going about his secular Affairs, he would find him yawn and gape, and stretch himself, and gain as much Attention, as he that tells a story to a Man, whose mind is employed about other Objects; he seems to give him the hearing, but when a great part of the Tale is told, he starts up, and asks, *What do you say?* But in private, where there is none but God and his own Conscience, God can best answer the Sinner's Objections against a serious conscientious Life, and the Sinner is most likely to attend to God's Proposals; for here, if his Flesh and Blood doth plead, that the Sin he is to leave is sweet, and pleasing, and profitable, God can presently argue with him; Dost thou call that sweet, which is most bitter and grievous to thy God, and must expire into the bitterest Groans? Is that so pleasing to thee, which offends and grieves thy blessed Redeemer, who descended into Hell to snatch thee out of it? And, can any Profit here counterpoise

terpoise the Eternal Loss of thy Soul? So if he plead, That the Sin he harbours is but a little one, his Conscience can immediately dash the Plea, and reply, How! Can that be little which offends an infinite Majesty? Can that be little which nailed *Christ* to the Cross? Since thou knowest, that this little Sin is injurious to God's Holiness, What Delight canst thou take in affronting him, in whose Power it is, either to save thee, or to damn thee? The less it is, the greater Shame it is, that thou shouldst plead for keeping it; the less it is, the sooner it may be parted withal: O flatter not thy self! thy great Love to this Sin makes the Sin itself great; and, Canst thou be said to love God, that canst hug that, which thou knowest runs counter to his Honour and Glory?

In the same Manner, all other Exceptions may be answered, and the Sinner finding that the Reasons he formerly thought invincible are so easily dashed and blown away, is most likely to hearken to the far stronger Arguments of God, and his own Conscience: The rather, because he retired on purpose, to have a clearer Sight of his Ways than before he had; And since God doth vouchsafe him so distinct a Prospect of his Folly and propostorous Love, he justly thinks, That not to yield to God's Reasonings, is to mock him, and favours of such Ingratitude as admits of no Excuse. Indeed, without Retirement, our Thoughts and Considerations flow at large, like Water in the Sea, and we can make no great Observations concerning them: But in Retirement,
they

they are much like Water in a Weather-Glass, and by them we may guess, what Temper our Souls are in, whether hot or cold, more exactly than Men do at the Warmth or Coldness of the Weather, by the rising or falling of the Liquor in those Glasses. In such Retirements, a holy Awe and Reverence seizes on the Soul; and when I see Men can retire to drink, to play, to sleep, and to debauch themselves, I see no Reason but they may (I am sure they have greater Reason to do it) retire to consider the Good and Welfare of their immortal Souls.

I have already proved, that Consideration must be frequent, and consequently this Retirement must be so too: not that a Man must never reflect on his Actions, or mind whether they be good or bad, but when he retires; No, Consideration is either occasional, or a solemn and set Duty; either an habitual Guide, or an extraordinary Remembrancer; the former, as it is universally useful, and a great Means to prevent Sin in a true Believer, to check him when he would commit it, to engage him to Repentance when he is fallen, to direct him what he must do, and to encourage him to those Duties, which are proclaimed in his Ears, as necessary to Salvation; so it is a necessary Companion, where-ever we are, or whatever we are doing; and these occasional Considerations need no Retirement: But then where the stream of Man's Life must be turned, or the Actions of the Day reviewed, how far they have been agreeable to the Will of God, how far they have been contrary to it, or
where

where a strict Mortification of Sin must be used, or where a long neglected Duty must be made a familiar guest in thy Soul; in a Word, where the Work to be done is of some more than ordinary difficulty, there those occasional Reflections will not serve turn, but more solemn Considerations must be called in, and these solemn Considerations are properly the things which require retirement, and, as 'tis fit they should be used once a day at least, so he that truly minds the Interest of his Soul, that some time every Day retires, and considers, how he hath behaved himself that day toward God and Man, whether his Heart hath not been too much carried out after the Comforts of this World, what Inroad they have made upon his Love to God, and how they will fill the garden of his Soul with Weeds, if he do not stop their Progress betimes, and root them up; what company he hath been in that day, what he hath done in his Closet, what his Thoughts, Words, Desires, Actions, Affections, have been that day, whether he hath not been more concerned for the Trash and perishable Riches of this Life, than the Glory of God, and the Salvation of his Soul; and how necessary it is for him, having had a fall that day, to be more careful, and cautious, and circumspect the next. This Consideration is the Pulse of the Soul, which, while it is beating, it is a great Sign that there is Life in the Soul, and a good Argument that God will increase and enlarge that Life. And, as Edification, and Progress in goodness, ought to be the real designs of retiring from the World, so it doth necessarily import,

that

that Men ought to chuse the liveliest Hours, or the hours when their Spirits are most active, and freest from Drowziness, for so great a Work. When Men are drowzy and sleepy, Considerations may often come in, but they are so weak and faint, that they leave the Soul as cold as they found it, and put it into the Circumstances of that Man in the Gospel, who took Men for *walking Trees*, saw something, but knew not what to make of it, or what Name to give it.

While I am discoursing thus, methinks I see the sensual Reader smile; Retirement, thinks he, this were to make my self a Prisoner in the soft Times of Peace, and to deprive my self of that Freedom, which God and Nature hath given me: This were to go into a *Monastery*, and submit to the Severities of a *Convent*; This, at the best, can only besit a Priest, but can be no Qualification of a Gentleman: Indeed, if Gentlemen had no Heaven to gain, no Hell to avoid, if God had made them Beasts, as too many do make themselves, we should not be displeased at this rambling talk; but 'tis an old Trick, where Men have aversion from a Duty, to represent it in a dismal Dress, and to take off the Burthen from their own Shoulders, and to bind it upon others. If they could satisfie God with these shufflings, as easily as they do their own Consciences, they were safe, but that the great Day must decide; And when the *Archangel* shall sound his Trumpet, to gather the Dead from all Parts of the World, and God, who prescribed to all Men but one Way to Happiness, shall make a strict Examination how every one
hath

hath observed the rules and statutes of that Way; it will appear, That this Retirement, in order to a serious pondering of our Actions, was a Duty incumbent on some People else, besides Ministers. He that retires upon this account, doth indeed imprison himself, but it is, that he may attain to true and perfect Liberty, triumph over the slavery of Sin, lead his Corruption captive, and free himself from the dregs and dross which corrupted Nature hath brought upon him: Little doth the sensual Man think what felicity he robs himself of, by scorning this Retirement. Here Heaven would look more beautiful to him than in a crowd; here he might in a manner with *St. Stephen*, see the Heavens open, and his Saviour standing at the Right hand of God; Here he might truly enjoy himself, and look with pity on those Men, who, like Spirits, which are sometimes seen in Mines, with great Labour, do nothing at all to any Purpose; and when they have tried and wearied themselves in the World, like Flies, burn themselves in that Candle about which they have been hovering.

Come, Sinner, prepare thy Pencil, mingle the richest Colours thou canst get, draw thy sinful careless Life, give it a beautiful Virgin's Face; draw all the Charms that thy Fancy can find out; here, draw the Adoration the World pays unto her, there the bows and cringes, whereby both great and small insinuate into her Favour. On her head draw a Tree, whose Fruit is Gold, and the Dew thereof hardens into Pearls; Let her Right hand grasp a Crown, and her left drop
Gifts

Gifts on her Counts and Votaries. But then, when this proud Peacock is drawn thus, in all her dazzling Circles, forget not to draw her ugly Feet, I mean, an unquiet, roaring, disturbed, distracted, trembling Conscience; for into this dismal shape, doth that lovely *Mermaid* end. On the other side, I'll paint a Wilderness, a Grove, which wise Nature made, and in it I'll represent a devout Soul kneeling, and, with the Publican, smiting upon her Breast; then will I draw Heaven, and out of that Heaven, Grace and Mercy in the shape of an Angel, flying down with this Message, *Fear not, I have redeemed thee, thou art mine*; and holding a Bottle under to catch her Tears: Immediately upon this, the Holy Ghost shall be seen descending, spreading his Beams, and warming that Soul, and invigorating it to resist the World, the Flesh, and the Devil: By and by the Glory of God shall appear, and crown all with Peace, and Joy, and infinite Content, and eternal Hallelujahs.

And now, Sinner, which of these Pictures wouldst thou chuse? Do not the homely Feet of the former fright thee? Can all the beauty thou seest in that painted Harlot, countervail the misery it dies into? Is an ever-gnawing Conscience matter of sport and laughter? When all these painted Gaudes must break into a dismal Dungeon, wilt thou laugh a While, that thou may'st mourn and lament for ever? But if thou art so fond of this dangerous Garden, that nothing can reclaim thee from being delighted with it; take thy choice, give me the other Landkip.

I know this World, Men are so fond of, e'er long will have an end, and their Pleasures will have an end, and their Sins will have an end, and their Glory will have an end; but where these end, God's Justice and Indignation begins: Blessed is the Man that hath then the God of *Jacob* for his Refuge, the Lord will deliver him in the time of Trouble. What if I enjoy none of the World's wanton Solaces? I know where better and stronger Consolations are to be had: What if Thorns and Briars surround my Lillies and Roses? I know they are but to preserve them, and to hinder the Devil from tearing them to Pieces: These Thorns are my safeguard, which will, e'er long, be done away, and when I am out of the Reach of all Enemies, my Lillies will continue fresh, and flourishing for ever: What need I covet the World, when I am made to live above the World? What should I love this Earth for, when I have a God to love? Why should I dote on Nature, when I am in the state of Grace? God hath made me many glorious Promises; How can I forbear rejoycing under the Thoughts of them? By Grace I am made Partaker of the Divine Nature;

*Vid. Euseb. Nierem.
de ador. lib. 1. c. 12.
& seq.*

Wonderful Dignity! Being advanced so high, Why should I be enamoured with a little Dust? When God hath made me a King, Why should I debase my self, or stoop to the mean Employment of a Peasant? I know God doth not see as Man do see, a Soul that loves him above all, is more esteemed
in

in his sight, than the proudest Monarch; nor do Rags fright him from fixing his Habitation there, where he meets with an humble, broken Heart: Let others glory in their great Titles, in this I'll glory, that I am a Child of God. Who can express the Honour God bestows on those that give their Hearts to him? To be a Child of God is infinitely greater Honour than to be of Kin to Princes, or to have the Blood of Nobles running in my Veins. A Father expresses greater Endearments to him that participates of his Nature, and draws his Substance from him, than to him that's only like him in the Face; How far greater Love then may I conceive in God to a Child, which by Grace is a Partaker of Divine Nature, than to the blessed Angels themselves? The whole Creation in a manner participates of the Divine Nature; but all other Creatures are but Pictures, painted Images of that glorious Nature; he that is a Child of God, is a lively Image of his Father which is in Heaven, and he hath Fellowship and Communion with the Father, and his Son *Jesus Christ*. What Mysteries are these things to a poor Worldling? But oh! How comfortable to him that feels the good Spirit bearing Witness with his Spirit, that he is a Child of God! If God be my Father, then all the Riches he hath are mine; if he be my Father, he cannot but take special Care of me; for, *Can a Mother forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Fruit of her Womb; yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee, behold I have engraven thee on the Palms of my Hand, Isa. 49. 15, 16.*

Fathers sometimes expose their own Lives to save their Sons; God hath done infinitely more for me, for he assumed human Nature, and exposed his Life for me, who was an Enemy, and a Traitor to him, that I might become his Son.

By Grace I am the Friend of God; if God had not taken me for his Child, yet how Excellent, how Incomprehensible would the Favour be, that he Vouchsafes to take me into the Number of his Friends? What a stir do Men keep, to purchase the Friendship of great Men? How little do they esteem the Friendship of the Almighty? They have not Souls clear enough to admire the Mercy; their Understandings are too earthy to adore so great a Bounty; it requires too much Spirit and Mind, to be ravish'd with such Compassion. A Friend is often loved better than near Relations; What may not I promise my self from this Love and Friendship of God? What Calamity or Misery is there, in which this Love cannot hold my Head, and keep it from aking? To be loved of God, is to be fed with the richest Stream, and to live upon *Milk* and *Honey*. If God laid down his Life for his Enemies, What will he not do for his Friends? When I was his Enemy, God seemed to love me more than he did himself, and now that I am his Friend, shall I think he will love me less than an Enemy? How should I rejoyce to have such a Friend as *Jonatban* was? But alas! What is this Friendship to God's Love? All human Friendship is perfect perfidiousness, in comparison of God's Friendship. God so loves his Friends, that
he

he knows not how to be separated from them ; if God had no other Place to move in, but Heaven, he would leave that Heaven, and come down and join himself to those, whom by his Spirit he hath adopted into the Number of his Friends ; so great, immense, is his Love to them. He that is a Friend of God, becomes God's individual Companion. What a Favour would it have been counted, if the Son of God, when he was on Earth, would have joined himself to one particular Man, and would have never departed from him ? What a Privilege then must it be, for one who is God's Friend, to have the Divinity always present with him, not only as a Companion, but as an Inhabitant, for *he dwells in us by his Spirit*. Did ever any Father love his Son so as never to part Company ! Did ever any Mother love her Child so as never to suffer it to go from her Arms ? But God is continually embracing his Friends. Among Men, a Father cannot be always there where his Son is, but God knows not how to be from him that is his Friend ; and though God be in all Creatures by his Essence, Presence, and Power, yet that is, because he is God ; with a gracious Soul he is, because that Soul is his Friend, and if God were not immense and infinite, and could not be with his other Creatures, yet he would be with such a Soul with whom he is *one Spirit* ; and if he could forget Things, yet he could not forget such a Soul, or lay aside the Thoughts of his Prosperity and Welfare ; and if he could forsake his other Creatures, yet he could not forsake such a Soul, but would work always

some good or other in her: For God's Love being strong 'tis always active, and where God bears a good Will to her, he cannot but communicate Goodness to her.

And shall I, after all this, repine, because I am not a favourite of Kings and Princes, when I have God for my constant Guide and Associate? How shall I stand amazed at the strangeness of the Favour? If God should charge all the Angels of Heaven, all the ten thousand times ten thousand Spirits which wait upon him, to go and attend such a Man with all the Grandeur and Majesty imaginable; yet what is all this but a Defart to God's Society? In having him for my Associate, I enjoy more Dignity, more Majesty, more Pomp and Glory, than if I had all the Armies of Heaven waiting upon me; and can I think God is always with me, and will not provide for me? If I should neglect all Things in the World, and mind nothing but the Things of God, and my Father's Business, I might be confident that he would feed me, and support me, because so Great, so Good, so Almighty, so Kind a Friend could not see me perish. The Son of God hath not honoured any Angel with the name of Brother, and yet if I am united to him by Grace, and by his Spirit, I enjoy this Privilege; and as Mothers love those Children most, for which they have suffered and endured most; so I may be confident that God loves me most fervently, because he hath suffered for me on the Cross, and endured most bitter Torments and Agonies for me. How may I exult? How may I triumph in this Love?

O my God! The Angels, for the least drop of that Grace thou hast bestowed on them, are more beholden to thee than all other Creatures, for all their natural Gifts, and for the Creation of the whole World: But for the least Degree of Grace thou hast conferred on me, I am more beholden to thee than all the Angels in Heaven; for that I might live by Grace, thou deliver'dst thine own Son, the Son of thy Bosom, the brightness of his Father's Glory, to be crucified and to die for me, which is more than thou hast done for all the Angels in Heaven; and thus thou hast obliged me more than thou hast done the heavenly *Cherubims* and *Seraphims*.

Farewel, ungrateful treacherous World! I have seen enough of thy deceitful Presents. I'll follow thy weak Judgment no longer, I'll esteem no Riches but what my Saviour hath counted so: In following him I cannot err; Self-denial and doing the Will of God, were the Treasures he studied to be Master of; Why should not I judge that to be the Riches which God hath judged so? Why should not my Mind agree with the Verdict of the most High? Nay, when God doth love me so entirely, Why should not I, for love of him, conform my Understanding to his Judgment? I see, those that love the World, at the same Time confess, that they ought to love the everlasting Riches more; for, if the fading Things deserve their Love, Things Permanent, and Solid, and Eternal ought to be loved much more. I will not think much of Afflictions now, for I find that God, by them, would make me weary

of my fondness to perishable Trash, and elevate and embrace my Soul, to embrace those Treasures which neither Man nor Devils can steal away. Physicians, I see, when they would cure a sick Man, make him sicker than he is, by enjoining him Abstinence, by Aductions, by Vomitives, by putting him to greater Torments. I know my Soul is sick, God would make it perfectly well; but such is my sickness, that God must put me to pain and anguish, and great Trouble, before I can be well; my Heart is all Flint, but when this stone is struck sufficiently, it will then send forth Holy Fire; when my Flesh is weak, my strength will retire more to my Mind and Understandig, and I shall be fitter for Heaven. The glorified Bodies of Saints in the last Day, will be the more splendid and illustrious, the more they have been afflicted and tortured here, and shine the more, the more dismal the Dungeon was they were kept in, during their Abode in this Valley of Tears. Why should I weep, when God takes away from me the Cause of weeping? How many Thousands are now weeping in Hell, because they enjoyed so much of the World's comforts, and made them Occasions of affronting their Creator? Shall I count that Loss which is my Gain, and call my Want of Riches a Misfortune, when it is the greatest Remedy to fit my Soul for Heaven? What Imprudence is it in me, to desire that of God, which I ought to hate, at the most, love but with fear and trembling? What Inhumanity to my self is it, to beg Poison of the Father of Lights, and to
mur-

murmur that he gives me not that Viper, which will sting me into endless Tortures? My love of the World is Adultery, and shall I desire that wherewith I have committed Adultery? Is it not all one, as if a Woman should entreat her Husband to let her enjoy the pleasure of an unlawful Bed? The Husband doth shew great Mercy to her, in that, when he might punish her more severely, he only removes the Adulterer; and shall I count that Mercy an Injury? In wishing for the Riches and Greatnesses of this World; I do as much desire God to give me that, whereby I do offend him. Shall I be angry with a Chirurgeon, who, to prevent the spreading of my Cancér, cuts off a Member, to preserve my Life? And shall I take it ill of God, for wounding my Flesh, to draw out the Arrows that stick in my Heart, and would fester, and kill me, if not pull'd out betimes?

How shall I be crowned, if I strive not? How shall I strive, if I have no Temptation? I cannot strive without an Enemy, and without striving there can be no Victory. The Workman doth not pull the Gold out of the Fire, till sufficiently refined; and shall I murmur, that God lets the fiery Trials continue upon me, when it is certain, that my Gold is not yet fit to be received into the Sanctuary? I am full of Dangers, but my greatest Danger is Security. Men fear, and quake, and tremble, if they are in the midst of an hundred Enemies. I have all the Devils in Hell against me, and a whole Army of Lusts bent to ruine me, and am not afraid.

And when there is nothing can rouse me from my Security, but Affliction, ought not I to kiss the Rod? In the greatest Troubles I may be assured, that God loves me, and that it is not his Anger, but his Love, that follows me with Chastisements; and, Why should I fret under the Yoke, especially when fretting and struggling to shake it off before God's Time, doth but make my Neck more sore, and the Yoke far more uneasy? I brought the cause of suffering with me into the World, which is Sin; and how can I expect I shall be freed from suffering, till I am freed from Sin? God might have placed me in Heaven, immediately upon my coming into the World, without any of these outward Troubles: He could as easily produce Bread out of the Earth, as he doth the Ears of Corn; but, that Man may sweat and labour, and relish his Bread the better, he causes only the Ears of Corn to spring, and of them Bread must be made; so, by labour and suffering, God leads me unto Glory, that I may the better relish his Bounty and Liberality, and my Rest may be the sweeter after my Toil and Tempests here. Affliction, I know, cannot hurt me, for my Saviour hath been my Taster; there can be no Bitterness in these Herbs, when my God hath seasoned them. Why should I love God less than Dogs do their Masters? These poor Brutes are beaten, and struck, and chid, and pelted with stones, and yet the more they are beaten, the more they love their Owners, and cringe, and bow, and humble themselves before them; Shall I be worse than a Beast, and shall

shall I carry a rational Soul in my Breast, and kick against those pricks which God hath set to guard me from eternal Flames? All my sorrows and bitterness will shortly be poured out into an Ocean of sweetness; and, How little of it shall I perceive then? It will then be all lost in a Sea of Glory, and I shall forget that I was poor, and wretched, and naked, and miserable, when I shall be eternally enriched with God's Bounty, enamour'd with his Perfection, decked with his Majestick Robes, comforted with his Consolation, delighted with his Love, enriched by his Wisdom, and satisfied with his Beauty, in whose Presence there is fulness of Joy, and Pleasure at his Right Hand for evermore.

These are some descants upon the Picture of *Retirement*; with such Consolations can he that retires, refresh himself, while the Man that wears himself with the Vanities of this World finds no solid Peace; and when he comes to die, must look upon his former Life with Horror and Anxiety. But,

II. Another great Help to Consideration, is *Prayer*; this is the Ambassador that must go to Heaven, and fetch the Assistance of God's Spirit from thence. Consideration shews me my Danger, and my Happiness, but it is the Spirit of God must blow up my Affections, that they may actually shun the one, and reach after the other; and this Spirit must be had by Prayer, not by Lip labour, not by Prayer unto which the Heart is a Stranger, and knows not what the Tongue means in making such

a Noise, but by Prayer, which expresses the real Desires of the Heart; By Prayer, that flows from a deep sense of the absolute Necessity of the Grace of God, and hath Fire and Flames enough to bear it up into Heaven. *For if you which are evil, can give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?* saith Christ, *Luke 11. 13.* And what kind of Asking this is, appears from the Parable immediately preceeding; *For which of you, saith Christ, Verse 5. shall have a Friend, and shall go to him at Midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me Three Loaves; for a Friend of mine in his Journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, for the door is now shut, and my Children are with me in Bed, I cannot rise and give thee: I say unto thee, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his Friend, yet because of his Importunity he will rise, and give him as many as he needs.* And then it follows immediately, *Ask, and it shall be given you,* i. e. Ask for God's Holy Spirit, with the same Importunity, with the same Fervency and Earnestness, that this Man did the Loaves; follow God with incessant Cries, resolve not to be denied, and it shall most certainly be given you.

The Truth is, importunate and fervent Prayer shews a Man is in good earnest, and that he doth not come to God out of Formality, or merely to satisfy the Motions of a fearful Conscience, but that a great Sense of the Goodness and

and Mercy of God, and of his Spiritual Wants and Necessities, puts him upon Prayer, and such Prayers God cannot despise, because he hath promised to hear them; and of this the Evangelist gives us a very illustrious Example in the Woman of *Canaan* crying unto Christ, *Lord help me.* The Answer is rough, *It is not meet to take the Childrens Bread and give it unto Dogs:* Yet this doth not terrifie her, she doubles her Cries, and seems to catch our Saviour in his own Words, *Truth, Lord; yet the Dogs eat of the Crumbs which fall from their Masters Table.* And now God can hold no longer, but from his Mouth drops the joyful Word, *O Woman, great is thy Faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt,* Mat. 15. 25, 26, 27.

Prayer sanctifies Consideration, and where the Soul begs hard of God, That God would set Home the Reflections she hath had, and work her into a Willingness to close with his Will, that he would increase that Light which Consideration hath given her; give that Light Fire too, to warm as well as clear her, and drive and force those Convictions, Consideration hath afforded her, into a serious Conversion; terrifie her so with that sight of Sin, which Consideration hath presented to her, that she may remain no longer in the Suburbs of Hell, but come out of *Sodom*, and so allure her with that Beauty of Holiness, which Consideration hath let her have a View of, that she may not be able to resist the Splendor, but submit to the Power, and send his Spirit so to move upon her Affections, so to actuate her Endeavours,

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so to encourage her with Promises, that it may not be in the Power of the Devil, nor in the Power of her Lusts, to gain-say, or contradict, or dash the Resolution she hath taken ; where the Soul doth with strong Desires pour out these her Requests before God, appeals to his Goodness, and solicites his Clemency, the good Father opens the Gates of Heaven, lets in the Messenger, makes him welcome, smiles upon him, and sends him back laden with Mercy, and puts Words into his Mouth, and bids him tell the Soul boldly from that God who heareth Prayer, *I have heard thee in an acceptable Time, in the Day of Salvation have I succoured thee, I will pour out my Spirit upon thee, I will open Rivers in high Places and Fountains in the midst of Valleys ; I will make thy Wilderneck a Pool of Water, and thy dry Land springs of Water : I will plant in the Wilderneck the Cedar, and the Myrtle, and the Oil-tree will I set in the Desert, that thou mayst see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the Hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it, II. Cor. 6. 2. Isa. 41. 11, 12, 20.*

Up then, Christian, who art resolved not to let the Concerns of thy Soul lie at six and sevens, who art afraid to venter Eternity with the careless besotted World : Like another *Lazarus*, beg Alms of the King of Heaven, Cry aloud, and spare not ; shew him thy Wounds, thy Ulcers, thy Poverty, thy Want, thy Necessity ; let a greater Fervency attend thy Prayer for Spiritual Blessings, than others use in begging

ging for temporal Mercies. Prayer is the Way to be enriched with all the Treasures of Heaven; seek God's Assistance with Tears in thine Eyes; remember thy Soul is infinitely more precious than the Body: And if a Beggar in the Street is so earnest with those that pass by, to give him something for the Relief of his Corporal Wants, oughtest not thou to be all on fire, to procure those Blessings which will enrich thy Soul for ever? Behold, how others have sped: Behold, how *Theodosius* the Emperor prays, and the Winds fight for him: Behold, how *Annianus* prays, and the Army of *Attila* is defeated upon't. Behold, how the Christian Soldiers under *Aurelius* pray, and on a sudden the Heavens drop down Rain to refresh the fainting Warriors! Behold, how *Arcadius* prays, and the Earthquake ceaseth! Behold, how *Paul* the *Novatian* Bishop prays, and the Fire, which invaded the Church, is stopped! *Joseph's* Brethren were pinched with Famine, because they knew not that their Brother Reigned in *Egypt*: Why shouldst thou starve, Christian, when thy Elder Brother Reigns in Heaven, who knows what thou wantest, and is a faithful High-priest, and is touched with the feeling of thy Infirmities, and was in all Points tempted, even as thou art? Come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that thou mayst obtain Mercy, and find Help in the Time of Need. If God hath done Good to others for his Servants Sake, who have pleased him; What will not God do for thee, for his Son's Sake, in whom alone he is well pleased? If God doth so highly esteem the

Piety

Piety of Men that he professes, for my Servant *Jacob's* Sake, for my Servant *David's* Sake, I will be kind to such a one; Will he derogate, dost thou think, from the Merits and Love of his own Son? Will he harden his Heart, or stop his Ears, or turn away his Eyes, when thou callest upon him *for Christ's sake to send down upon thee the Day-spring from on high?* Christ is the very Object of God's Delight, nothing is sweet, nothing is pleasing to him, but through and in Christ; Whatever is amiable, and acceptable in us, it is for Christ's sake, that God doth think it so. Without Light, all Colours are invisible, there is no Beauty in them, the Light shining upon them makes them look lovely and amiable; Without Christ, nothing would appear pure, or lovely, or great, or delightful. O *Jesu!* How ought our Souls to rejoyce in thy Name! How dear, how precious ought thy Death to be in our Eyes, seeing by that we live, and thy Cross is our Exaltation, thy Contempt makes us honourable, and thy Tears give us a Title to Joys which last for ever. He that looks through a green Glass, fancies all Things he looks upon to be Green; God looking upon our Holy Endeavours in Christ Jesus, they all appear to him lovely and good, because all that Christ did was good, and infinitely pleasing to him. The World had perished Ten thousand Times, if God had not looked upon it through his Son, and so supported it; he that looks through a Glass upon a stinking Carcass afar off, doth not smell the ill scent of it; so God, through Christ, looks upon our

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Imperfections, and he smells not the ill favour of our Performances. Take Courage then, and lay hold on the Horns of his Altar; and if thou knowest not what to say, when thou hast taken a serious View of thy Ways, make use of this, or some other Form.

OH thou, who art the Father of the Spirit of all Flesh, the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning; here lies a poor miserable sinful Wretch before thee, not worthy to lift up his Eyes and Hands to Heaven; I know not where to look for shame and confusion of Face, so long have I gone astray from thee, so often have I provoked thee, so often have I slighted thee, so often have I turned thy Grace into Wantonness, so long have I traded in Sin, and been busie with Iniquity, so long have I play'd with Mercy, and made a Laughing-stock of Punishment, that thou mayst justly absent thy self from me for ever; so disingenuously have I dealt with thee, so often have I endeavoured to blind thy All-seeing Eye, and to cheat my self, that thou mightest justly cause me to fall a Prey to Satan, look stern upon me, and charge me, never any more to see thy Face. O wretched Creature that I am! Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death? Oh my Lord! how often hast thou darted Rays of Light into my Soul, and the impure Fire of my Lusts hath prevailed against them? How often hast thou suggested to my Soul, the Danger it hath been in, and yet I have not trembled? How often hast thou stung my Heart;
pricked

pricked it, and goad it into serious Reflections? And how soon hath this vain World taken me off again, and dull'd and dash'd these Considerations? How often hast thou sent Marks of Grace into my Soul, while I have done what I could to smother that Holy Fire? How justly mightest thou say, My Spirit shall no longer strive with thee? O my God, there is no Plague, no Punishment, that's threatned in thy Law, but I have deserved it; I only stand amazed at thy Patience, that I have escaped so long, without being consumed and ruined. Wilt thou receive such a Prodigal into thy Favour? Wilt thou be reconciled to so great a Rebel? Wilt thou pass by Unkindness of so deep a Dye? Are the Gates of Mercy open yet for so vile a Wretch? Do not I come too late, O my Lord, to the Throne of Grace? Will God yet be intreated for such a poor forlorn Creature? Is there yet Compassion left for such a poor Sinner? O my God, I question not thy Power but thy Will, to pity such a Traytor as I have been: I know thy Mercy is infinite, it would be a Disparagement to thy Glory and Perfection, to deny the exceeding Riches of thy Grace; Thou couldst not be God, if my Sins exceed thy Power to forgive; but when I reflect on thy Threatnings, how justly thou denouncest Wrath and Indignation against all those that obstinately prefer their foolish Desires before all the Dictates and Oracles of the Holy Spirit: O have not I Reason to fear that thou wilt say to me, Thou hast forsaken me, and served other Gods, wherefore I will deliver thee no more. And yet

yet how free, how full, are thy Promises to the truly Penitent? How full of Sweetness, and Love, are all thy Gracious Engagements to those that will have no more to do with Idols, that will cleave to thee alone, that will renounce themselves, and follow thee? O my Lord, these thy Promises are my Refuge; were it not for these Desperation would be my Portion. I do in some measure see my Folly; I see what a Gracious, Tender, Patient, Long-suffering God I have offended; I see how my Soul hath leaned on broken Reeds, what a sandy Foundation I have trusted to, how the World hath beguiled me, how I have shunned thy Company, been glad when God hath been farthest from my Thoughts, rejoiced when I have been least of all reflecting on thy Goodness. I have nothing to plead for my self, I have no Apology to make, the greatest Charity cannot excuse my Misdemeanours; I have had Light, and darkned it; Conventions, and smothered them; Knowledge, and abused it; Reason, and perverted it; heard thy Word, and scorned it; enjoyed the Means of Grace, and continued blind and hard under them. Thy Mercy is my Sanctuary, I am weary of my Burthen, I loath my Transgressions, I am willing to be rid of them, I desire to abhor them; but though I am thus willing, my Flesh is weak, my Understanding dark, my Will dull, my Affections to Goodness faint, my Resolutions inconstant. Come, O my Lord, come down into my Soul, come quickly, O thou great Preserver of Men! Teach me to answer all the Reasons of Flesh and Blood, against a serious Conversion; Arm me with Arguments to beat down my carnal Interest; furnish

me with Motives to a truly Heavenly Life ; Motives which may break thro' all the Devil's Suggestions ; Motives which may invalidate and weaken the prophane Motions of my Lusts. Come down, thou Sun of Righteousness, thou mighty Star of Jacob, dispel the Clouds, and Mists, which are upon my Reason ; clear the Eyes of my Understanding, and enable me to see the Arts of Sin, the Wiles of the Devil, the Snares of the World, the Stratagems of the Flesh, and all the Mischiefs that is plotted against my Soul, by my Spiritual Enemies. Convince me thoroughly, that to follow thee is my greatest Interest, that to resist these Enemies is my greatest Safety, that to watch against these Charms is my greatest Felicity. O let me apprehend Sin, as it is the greatest Evil, let it appear very terrible to my Mind ; represent unto me Heaven, and thy Love, and all that thou hast done for me, in such lively Colours, that neither Death, nor Life, neither good Report, nor evil Report, may separate me from thy Love. O let thy Kindness, and the Benefits of thy Son's Death, and Passion, and Resurrection, appear to me in such Characters, that I may long to be filled with all the Fulness of God. The Spirit is perfect Light, and there is no Darkness with him : O let that Glorious Light dissipate that Gloominess, those Fogs, that Confusedness, that is in my intellectual Part ; make me conceive clearly, and distinctly what I must do to inherit Eternal Life, and how I must carry my self to God and Man. Give me such a Sight of thy Glory, as may lift me up above the World, and engage me to have my Conversation in Heaven. Bow my Will, to conform in-
tirely

tirely to thy Will; I would not be mine so much as thine. Come, Lord, and take the Government of my Soul into thy Hand! I have too long suffered myself to be guided by merciless Tyrants: Art thou not my Master, my Prince, my Father? Thou hast the greatest Right to rule me. Incline my Will unto thy Testimonies, and not to Covetousness; when my Will would wander from thy Precepts, cross it, and put a Stop to it, that it may not go beyond the Limits of thy Law. O heal my Affections, they hanker too much after this Earth; O make them in love with Heaven; chide them for deserting their highest and their chiefest Good; Let my Hatred pitch upon no other Object, but Sin; Let my Love be carried out after nothing so much as thee: And if I love any Thing besides, let me love it only for thy Sake. Let my Hopes be fixed upon Immortality, engross thou my Desires, let me fear none but thee, let my chief Delight be in thy Ways and Ordinances, strengthen my Resolutions, O deliver me from that Guiltiness I have so long been guilty of; Make my Purposes firm, let them be as the Mountains of God, which can never be moved, let nothing be able to weaken my good Intentions, give me Courage to fight the good Fight: O Lord, in thy Strength I'll resist, by thy Power I will conquer. My Heart hath locked thee out; O knock again, and if it will not yield, break open the Door, and let all my Corruptions vanish at thy Presence. O Lord, I beg no Riches, no Honours, no Preferments; If I have but Food and Raiment, I will learn therewith to be contented; 'tis thy Grace I want; establish me with the free Spirit; Give me Spirit-

tual Wisdom, even that Wisdom which makes me wise unto Salvation. Thou art nigh unto them that call upon thee, yea, unto all such as call upon thee faithfully: O cast me not away from thy Presence, I am thine, O save me, order my Steps according to thy Word; when I read it, let me read it with that Attention, as to observe and take Notice of what thou dost Command; when I hear it, let me hear it, as if it were the last Time that ever I should hear it: Let thy Oracles make deeper Impressions on me than ever; dash all those Evasions and Excuses I used to alledge, when I have had no mind to obey thee; Let the good Motions of thy Spirit prevail: O that there should be such Difficulty in conquering a poor Sinner! O that God should be forced to caress me to my Happiness! O that Heaven should attract me no more! O that God should need to send out Messengers, to intreat me to come to the Supper of the Lamb! Lord, take away this Dulness, make me mount up with Wings as Eagles, let me not be able to go out of thy Presence, till I have fully and unfeignedly resolved to give up my self to thy Service.

O Jesu, the Light of the World, who enlightenest every Man that comes into the World, where thou dwellest, there Mercy dwells; O dwell in my Soul, and Mercy and Truth will kiss each other: Teach me to hate my self not only for the Hurt I have done to my self, but for the Injuries and Indignities I have offered thee; I was a horrid Monster, thou, by thy Death, madest me a pleasant Spectacle in the Sight of Heaven; I lay in the Mire and Pit, thou didst advance me into thy Father's

ther's Bosom; I lay trembling under the Jaws of the hellish Dragon, thou gavest me a Place in the Heart of God; I was unworthy of thy gracious Aspect, and thou hast made me capable of being embraced by the great and terrible God; I lay in a Dungeon, thou didst promote me to a Throne; thou hast done that for me, which I durst not have hoped or wished for: It had been enough to have delivered me from Hell, but that would not content thee, except I were raised above the Heavens, and above Angels too: It had been Favour enough, when my Condition was so desperate, if thou hadst purchased for me a Suspension, or Forbearance of thy Father's Anger, but thou didst go further, and didst purchase me a Pardon too; and not satisfied with that, thou didst incline thy Father's Love to me; and as if that had not been enough, thou didst procure me Gifts, and Blessings too, and not only Blessings in general, but the greatest Blessings imaginable, even thine own Kingdom, and thine own Heritage. How unworthy have I lived of this incomprehensible Love? O that I might not be able to reflect upon my Life without Indignation! Thou art the Way, the Truth, and the Life; direct me, and I'll strive to enter in at the strait Gate, purify my Spirit, wash my Soul with thy Blood, that's the Eye-salve which will make me see, that's the Medicine which will cure my Blindness: O cleanse me, and I shall be whiter than snow; O thou inexhausted Fountain of Goodness, let me not go away dry from thee, let the Light of thy Countenance always shine about me, and by that Light let me discover not only my grosser sins, but my more secret Cor-

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ruptions. Draw me after thee, and I shall run, hide me in thy Wounds, be my Advocate, and plead my Cause; thou spreadest open thy Arms to all that desire Rest, behold I come, receive me Graciously, love me Freely, teach me to rely on thee, my Joy, my Treasure, my Sovereign Comfort; cause all the Fruits of thy Spirit to grow in my Soul; O help me, or else I perish; O assist me, or else I faint; my Conscience terrifies me, O do thou speak Peace unto it; the roaring Lion threatens to devour me, O shew thy glittering Sword, and drive him away. God's Anger burns against me, O throw some Drops of thy Blood into that Fire, and it will go out. Let me be content to sell all for thee, let me not scruple to part even with the best Things I have for thy Service; set me as a Seal upon thy Heart, stream down the Waters of Life upon me; I'll open my Mouth wide, O do thou fill it: I will live to my self no more, possess all my Faculties, and unite them to thee; Make me truly acquainted with my self, let those Joys thou hast promised to thy Saints, support me in all my Tribulations. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

O Thou Blessed and Eternal Spirit, vouchsafe to breathe upon me; blow upon my Garden, that the Spices may flow; move powerfully upon my Soul, that it may bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. Let me be truly afraid to resist thy Suggestions. Sanctifie and give success to all my Attempts to make my Calling and Election sure; when my stubborn Heart would baffle thy Designs to save me, let thy Grace overcome and conquer me; represent the Love of God to me in that Glory, that I may instantly throw down all I have at the Feet of Christ: O let my Soul be so dazzled with its Beams, that I may desire and breathe after nothing so much, as after a glorious Enjoyment of God. Break the Chains of my Sins, command the Fetters I have been bound in to fly asunder; whatever good Thoughts I have of God, increase them; enlarge my Soul, that I may truly delight of thinking of thee; let me feel the sweetness of Holiness, let me taste those Joys which thou dost vouchsafe to those that improve thy Motions; tempt me by a foretaste of Heaven's Glory, to lay force upon it. Give me a glimpse of yonder Paradise, that I may not faint in my Journey; give me Arguments against my self, that I may be deliver'd from my self. Fill all the Channels of my Soul with thy Gifts, while I sojourn here on Earth, let my Heart be in Heaven: Let not self-love in me hinder me from loving thee. Take my Heart away, and give me thy self; be thou my Heart, and all my Delight; wherever I am, be thou my Director, let thy Word be my Rule, and enable me to live according to that Rule. O Holy, Blessed,

and Glorious Trinity, one God, thou immense Sea of Happiness, make me to know what it is to be one with thee. O thou everlasting Goodness, O thou everlasting Wisdom, O thou everlasting Sweetness, Grant, I may see thee; seeing, may Love thee; Loving, may admire thee; admiring, may imitate thee; and imitating thee, may enjoy thee; enjoying thee, may never be separated from thee, but live in thy Light, and Love, and Glory, to all Eternity.

F I N I S.







